DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 028 374 AC 004 192

By-Kaplan, Abbott
Study-Discussion in the Liberal Arts. Studies in Adult Group Learning in the Liberal Arts.
Fund for Adult Education, White Plains, N.Y.
Pub Date 60
Note-145p.
Available from-Library of Continuing Education, 107 Roney Lane, Syracuse, N.Y. 13210 ($.35)
EDRS Price MF-$0.75 HC-$7.35
Descriptors-Adult Leaders, Age, *Cultural Centers, *Discussion Groups, Educational Background, *General Education, Income, Leadership Styles, Learning Motivation, Marital Status, Participant Characteristics, *Program Evaluation

Three Liberal Arts Centers in Los Angeles, Pasadena, and Whittier, California, sponsored by The Fund for Adult Education, were evaluated on the effectiveness of discussion groups in World Affairs Are Your Affairs; An Introduction to Humanities; Ways of Mankind; and World Politics. Data were collected from personal interviews with a random representative sample of participants (150), leaders (50), and directors of the test centers; by observation of discussion group meetings; and from relevant data and records at the centers. Participants were found to be atypical of the general adult population, having higher incomes, education, and occupations. The median age was 38, with 63% women, and 50% of the participants enrolling with their spouses. Interest in the subject matter, the discussion format, desire for intellectual stimulus, and educational level and prestige of the sponsoring agency, attracted participants. The programs attracted more liberals than conservatives, and group members felt others became more tolerant of opposing views, and were stimulated to continue in other educational and cultural activities. Mixed reactions were expressed to having subject matter specialists as leaders. Leaders had even a higher level of education and cultural interest, but tended to play too passive a role in discussion groups. (pt)

ED028374

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY William Griffiths TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

STUDIES IN
Adult Group Learning in the Liberal Arts

PROGRAMS
PARTICIPANTS
EFFECTS

FAE

Study-Discussion in the Liberal Arts

BY

Abbott Kaplan

AC004192

THE
FUND
FOR
ADULT EDUCATION

Study-Discussion in the Liberal Arts

BY

Abbott Kaplan

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 60-16559

Copyright ©1960
The Fund for Adult Education

Preface

BY

C. SCOTT FLETCHER
PRESIDENT
THE FUND FOR
ADULT EDUCATION

This book represents one of four "Studies in Adult Group Learning in the Liberal Arts" being published in 1960 by The Fund for Adult Education. The first one was an analytical history of the study-discussion programs developed by the Fund's Experimental Discussion Project: *Accent on Learning,* by the Director of the Project, Dr. Glen Burch. The other three are research studies, resulting from independent investigations conducted by highly competent research groups in the social sciences. Together they represent the first serious attempt to apply the methods of social science research to the evaluation of adult education programs: in this case, programs of reading and discussion in small groups led by nonprofessional students of the subject matter rather than by experts in it.

Established in 1951 by The Ford Foundation, the Fund was assigned a concern with "that part of the educational process which begins when formal schooling is finished." The Fund's Board of Directors defined their purpose as that of "supporting programs of liberal adult education which will contribute to the development of mature, wise, and responsible citizens who can participate intelligently in a free society." To these ends, the Fund has laid particular emphasis upon study-discussion programs in the liberal arts. It has done so not only through its own Project, but also by giving substantial financial assistance to universities, liberal arts centers, and national organizations which sponsored and promoted such programs, developed program materials, and trained leaders.

In 1959-60, the Great Books Foundation enrolled 50,000 participants in 2,700 groups in more than a thousand communities, in the United States and abroad. The American Foundation for Continuing Education had more than 10,000 group participants in nearly five hundred communities. Universities, colleges, public libraries, public evening schools, and a host of local social and civic agencies and educational groups, including private persons and their friends, have organized and sponsored the group study of these materials. In 1959, more than 15,000 men and women were engaged in the study and discussion programs brought into being by the Fund. While these were, for an experimental period, confined to ten "Test Centers" (mentioned in Burch's study, and described more fully in the Fund's biennial Report for 1955-57 and in a document to be issued later this year), by 1958 a rapidly growing list of other educational organizations, national and local, and of private groups, were using these programs. At the present time, twelve of the programs are being published or prepared for publication by commercial publishers; and the audio-visual components of the programs are being distributed by the Audio-Visual Center at the University of Indiana.

With the spread of study-discussion programs in the liberal arts came recognition of the need for careful study of the values and the effects of this method for the people who took part. As more colleges and universities moved to set up programs of this type, concern was felt by many faculty members over the maintenance of high educational standards, particularly where the group leadership was in the hands of those who were not professional educators. The Fund, therefore, as early as 1955, began a series of research grants for studies of the participants, the leaders, and the educational effectiveness of study-discussion programs, the studies being made by independent investigators not themselves connected with the program. Three major studies were made between 1955 and 1959.

The first study, made in 1956 by members of the faculties of the University of California at Los Angeles, the California Institute of Technology, and Whittier College, was directed by Abbott Kaplan, then Assistant Director of Extension at UCLA. The field of the studies consisted of 118 liberal arts groups, in four content areas: *World Affairs, World*

Politics, Ways of Mankind, and *Introduction to the Humanities.* The specific sample included 150 individuals who were members of groups in Los Angeles, Pasadena, and Whittier, and fifty of the group leaders: the method was based on 325 interviews, before, during, and after the ten-week program, and observation of 52 group sessions.

The second study was made in 1957 by the National Opinion Research Center of Chicago, using some 1900 participants in 172 *Great Books* groups. ranging from first-year to fifth-year status within that program. Interviewers visited the groups and administered detailed questionnaires; and the responses were coded on IBM cards and subjected to elaborate statistical analysis. The director of this study was Dr. James A. Davis.

The third major study, in 1958, was designed to compare learning effects of the same content, *Ways of Mankind,* with two methods: university lecture and lay-led group discussion. The sample studied consisted of three lecture classes, enrolling 283 adults, and twelve discussion groups with 293 participants, all within the liberal arts program of UCLA. Again, use was made of questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation. The director of this study was Dr. Richard J. Hill,* Department of Anthropology and Sociology, UCLA.

The publication of these studies, which were separately conceived and independently carried out, is not intended as a plea for one method over others. It is intended as a contribution to the discussion, among educators and interested adult students, of the appropriate place and use and purpose of one of the many methods of learning that appeal to men and women, and as an aid to educators and administrators in their choices of program methods and student "publics". Here, for the first time, are presented — though in admittedly preliminary form — responsible research data and statistical interpretation on adults in liberal arts programs. The studies themselves make it clear that the reading-discussion method attracts a particular kind of audience, and that the larger population from which it is drawn has many other tastes and proclivities. The question, therefore, is not, "Which method is best?" but, "What is the best type of program and method for given sorts of people, and what ends are best served by which educational means?"

If this broader question were studied for many types of education and many kinds of educational publics, our skill and effectiveness in adult education would be immeasurably advanced. It is to this greatly needed research effort that we hope to contribute by offering these studies to the public.

---

*Dr. Hill is now with the Department of Sociology, University of Texas.

Contents

Contents

PREFACE: C. Scott Fletcher

PART PAGE

I. INTRODUCTION 2

Adult education: enrollments; earlier character; student composition; newer aims. *Fund for Adult Education centers:* UCLA, Pasadena, Whittier College: populations, characteristics.

Purpose of the Study: questions, methods.

II. THE PARTICIPANTS 10

Background population; comparison with UCLA Extension. *Characteristics of study-discussion enrollment:* sex, age, married status, education, occupation. *Leisure time* interests: community involvement, church membership, political preference. *Reading habits;* TV and movie viewing; prior adult education.

Reasons for enrolling: enrollment with friend or spouse. Attitude toward sponsorship.

PART PAGE

III. VIEWS OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE DISCUSSION GROUP EXPERIENCE . 28

Satisfaction with program; likes and dislikes; what they learned; *leadership*. Comparison of responses by program. Criticisms and suggestions by participants. *Materials:* comparison of responses by program. Participants' comparisons with other kinds of education.

Experts as leaders: pro and con.

Effects: gains in knowledge; change in ideas; "open-mindedness"; comparison of responses by program. *Changes in habits:* reading, social activity, community involvement. *General evaluations.*

Case Histories: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H; comparisons.

IV. THE LEADERS 86

Background; characteristics, experience; reading and viewing; other adult education. *Reactions* to the group experience: *evaluation* of members, process, changes; evaluation of *materials;* suggestions; evaluation of *leadership patterns;* self-evaluation; comparisons by program.

Case Histories: two superior leaders; an average leader; a below-average leader. Discussion of qualities and factors in good leaders.

V. OBSERVATION OF MEETINGS 114

Organization and orientation; participation; development of *critical thinking; leadership;* materials; setting and atmosphere. General comment.

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 128

Part One

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Adult education enrollments have increased enormously in recent years. This has been true in university extension divisions, evening colleges and public evening schools. Adult education programs and offerings have also changed during this period. When public adult education programs were first established, they were largely remedial, that is to say, they were an effort to provide those who had not been able to achieve a public school or college education in their youth, an opportunity to do so through adult evening classes. Large proportions of university and public school adult education programs still consist of courses which are parallel to daytime courses. But, increasingly, courses geared to the needs and interests of adults, aside from diploma or degree requirements, have been developed. This development has not always been an easy one. School, and particularly university, faculties have tended to feel that the best way to guard the quality of evening offerings was to have them as much like daytime offerings as possible. Rarely have they recognized the fact that the adult student is quite a different kind of student in motivation, interest and maturity than the younger daytime student. New approaches which tended to deviate from the straight classroom-lecture-examination procedure were dimly viewed.

Another aspect of most adult education programs has been the fact that they have been largely vocationally- or credit-oriented. The larger percentage of enrollments has been and still is in business and technical subjects, or in those courses which would qualify the student for a diploma, certificate, or degree.

Meantime, the composition of the adult student body in evening programs, particularly on the university and college level, has changed considerably. This has been partially due to the rising level of educational achievement in the country. In the West, for example, in 1940, the average number of years of school completed by adults between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine years was 12.1. In 1950 it was 12.4. In California today it is estimated at approximately 14.0, or two years of college. In University Extension at the University of California, Southern Area, in 1951, 25.6 per cent of the extension students had had less than two years of college and 44.8 per cent were college graduates. In 1958, 18.4 per cent had had less than two years of college and 58.3 per cent were college graduates. While the educational achievement of adult students in the public school programs is not as high, it, too, has increased proportionately. It is clear, then, that adult education is no longer remedial in the old sense, and that increasingly its students have had a considerable amount of formal schooling.

An increasing number of adult students, particularly in the university and college adult programs, many of them college graduates, now come seeking educational and intellectual experiences in the liberal arts and social sciences without any concern for credit or professional advancement, but purely for their own satisfaction and intellectual development. Frequently, however, they are dissatisfied with the traditional approaches and requirements of the typical classroom situation which they had experienced as undergraduates or high school students.

To meet the changes in student composition and interests, adult educators have in recent years experimented with a variety of informal approaches that would attract adults to liberal arts programs and would stimulate intellectual activity as a continuing and normal aspect of their everyday lives.

In 1954-55 The Fund for Adult Education provided grants to a number of test centers across the country to experiment with adult discussion groups in the liberal arts, using materials developed or adapted by the Fund. The groups were to be led by lay leaders, that is to say, persons not especially trained in the subject matter of the discussion programs but who had some leadership qualities and could be trained in techniques of discussion leadership. The materials supplied for each program were to provide the basic information for the discussion.

Three such centers were established in the Metropolitan Los Angeles Area: — at Whittier under the auspices of Whittier College; in Pasadena under the auspices of the Pasadena Liberal Arts Center, especially established for the purpose; and at the University of California, Los Angeles, under the administration of its Extension Division. The latter institution had already had some experience with discussion groups under lay leadership. In the fall of 1953 the Extension Division had undertaken the sponsorship and direction of adult discussion groups in world politics in cooperation with the American Foundation for Political Education.*

In the fall of 1955 it was proposed to The Fund for Adult Education that a study be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the liberal arts discussion programs in the Metropolitan Los Angeles Area, to include the groups sponsored by the three centers. The Fund accepted the proposal and provided a grant for the investigation. The study got under way in the spring of 1956.

Although all three centers are in the Metropolitan Los Angeles Area, the communities in which they operate differ considerably from one another. The groups studied in the University-sponsored program were all located in the city of Los Angeles, predominantly in the western part of the city. As of January 1, 1955, the population estimates for the three test center cities as reported by the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission were:

Los Angeles	2,170,934
Pasadena	116,275
Whittier	31,376

Los Angeles is, of course, a large, complex, sprawling city. It has experienced enormous growth in the past ten years. Many of the residents have come to the city but recently. Where community loyalties or identification exist, they tend to be to the local neighborhood community rather than to the city itself. The city has many institutions of higher learning. These are on the university, college and junior college level. All the public institutions and some of the private ones offer educational and cultural programs for adults. The public school adult program in Los Angeles is one of the largest city programs in the United States. The Extension Division of the University of California, which sponsors the discussion groups in the city of Los Angeles, has a large administrative staff with specialized departments and services which are available to the Liberal Arts Discussion Program.

Pasadena, a smaller city, has long been noted for the civic pride of its residents. It is the home of the California Institute of Technology and the well-known Pasadena Playhouse (not to mention the Tournament of Roses and the Rose Bowl). The Pasadena City College has an extensive evening adult program and a high-caliber public forum series. In his study of American cities, Thorndike* devised a "G" score, or score of "goodness" made up of a large number of items indicative of the "goodness" or desirability of cities as places in which to reside. Included in the items were educational and cultural facilities. Three hundred and ten cities with populations of 30,000 and over were included in the study. Pasadena received the highest rating in the country. While the Thorndike Study was published eighteen years ago, it is probable that Pasadena would still rate high if a similar study were to be made today. The Pasadena Center was the only one of the three set up independently and unconnected with an institution of higher learning.

---

*Name changed in 1959 to American Foundation for Continuing Education.

Whittier, the smallest city of the three, is probably the most cohesive and the least cosmopolitan. It is rather conservative and more comparable to other cities of its size in the country than the other two. Whittier College, a small liberal arts college, is probably the most important single cultural influence in the community. The public schools too, however, are well thought of by educators, and conduct evening adult programs. Although the Whittier Liberal Arts Center was established under the auspices of the College and had the complete backing of the college administration, administratively it is in some ways more comparable to the Pasadena center than the UCLA center, in that it has a small staff and does not have the aid of the substantial extension machinery of the latter.

Thus, the groups under study were administered in three cities of different size and character and under different kinds of auspices. Indeed, these were among the factors that influenced the decision as to where the investigation was to be undertaken. It was believed that the conclusions would be more applicable to cities in other parts of the country than if groups in one city of a given size and character and under a particular type of sponsorship were studied.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of the Liberal Arts Discussion Programs on participants and leaders. Primary emphasis was on an effort to discover whether intellectual growth, civic participation or continued study has resulted from participation; and whether other social or educational values accrue from such participation.

Answers to the following questions, among others, were sought:

1. What kind of people enroll in the program?
2. What are the most common reactions of the participants to the program?
3. What relationships exist between certain participant characteristics and certain aspects or effects of the program?

---

*E. L. Thorndike, *Your City*. New York, Harcourt Brace and Company, 1939.

4. How did participants view this experience as compared with more traditional educational experiences they had had?
5. How effective was the leadership?
6. How successful were the discussion groups from the point of view of the leaders?
7. What effect did the experience have on the leaders?
8. How suitable were the materials?
9. To what extent was a subject-matter specialist missed?
10. What is the over-all educational significance and value of such discussion groups?

The Method

The data in the study were secured from direct, personal interviews with a random, representative sample of participants and leaders; interviews with the directors of the test centers; observation of discussion group meetings; and from relevant data and records available at the centers. The study was limited to discussion groups in four programs: World Affairs Are Your Affairs; An Introduction to the Humanities; Ways of Mankind; and World Politics. In most cases the groups met for ten weeks, one evening a week for two hours. There was a total of 118 groups in these programs, involving approximately 2,000 participants, in the period 1954 through the spring of 1956. As previously indicated, the World Politics programs had been launched before the other programs got under way.

A total of 150 participants were interviewed; 100 from Los Angeles groups and 25 each from Pasadena and Whittier groups. Fifty leaders from the three areas were also interviewed. Of the one hundred and fifty participants, one hundred were participants who had been in groups prior to the spring of 1956. They were interviewed once. The remaining fifty were new participants who enrolled in groups in the spring of 1956. They were interviewed three times: before the group started, in the middle of the series (after the fourth or fifth meeting) and after the last meeting. Of the fifty leaders, half were past leaders and the other half, new leaders. The former were interviewed once, the latter twice, before and after the program was completed.

Interviews averaged two hours. The interviewing was done by a team of five investigators: Dr. James Davis, a political scientist at the California Institute of Technology; Dr. Paul Albrecht, a psychologist at Claremont Men's College; Dr. Ben Burnett, a political scientist at Whittier College; Dr. Warren Schmidt, a psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the writer. Two of the investigators had had no previous experience in, or contact with, adult education. Prior to the investigation they were somewhat skeptical of the educational value of much of the work done in adult education. All were dubious of the value of discussion groups led by lay leaders having no specialized knowledge of the subject matter under discussion.

In addition to interviewing participants and leaders, the investigators observed four groups for the entire ten sessions, and the first, middle and last meeting of four additional groups. Comprehensive questionnaire schedules were used in the interviews. Each investigator also submitted a final report giving his general observations and estimate of the program. Two week-end leadership-training programs were also observed and meetings were held with two large groups of leaders after their programs were completed.

Acknowledgments

Much of the credit for whatever merit the study has must go to the investigators named above. Their thinking and observations are reflected in many parts of this report. Appreciation is also expressed, for their cooperation and counsel, to the directors of the three centers: Mrs. Betty Hansen, Pasadena; Dr. Betty Unterberger, Whittier, and Dr. Leonard Freedman, Los Angeles; to Mr. Leonard Klein, head of the American Foundation for Political Education programs at UCLA; to Mr. Henry Alter, Western Regional Director of the American Foundation for Political Education; and to Dr. Paul Sheats, Dean, University Extension, University of California.

Part Two

THE PARTICIPANTS

THE PARTICIPANTS

Background

What kind of people participate in the liberal arts discussion groups? Are they typical of the general population? Are they generally comparable to adults who enroll in regular University Extension courses? What are their normal leisure time, educational and cultural interests?

According to the annual reports of the Liberal Arts Centers, more women than men enroll. In the case of the Los Angeles program, sponsored by the University of California Extension Division, 61 per cent of the participants are women as compared with 39 per cent men. In the Whittier program men form a somewhat greater proportion, 43 per cent as against 57 per cent women. In Pasadena the ratio is in between the two. The ratio in the sample studied was almost identical with that of the Los Angeles distribution, 63 per cent women, 37 per cent men.

There was, of course, considerable variation among the discussion groups. Some groups had an approximately equal number of men and women. This was particularly true of those organized among friends and acquaintances in which most of the participants tended to be married couples. There were also a number of predominantly male groups. These tended to be company-sponsored or offered under the aegis of a men's civic organization. For example, Town Hall in Los Angeles, an exclusively male organization, has for some years sponsored these groups for its members. Many groups, however, had more women than men and this factor, as we shall see later, was considered by some to have some bearing on the quality of the discussions and the success of certain groups as compared with others.

Among regular University Extension students at UCLA, the distribution according to sex is just the reverse, 63 per cent men and 37 per cent women. But this includes all Extension students, a large percentage of whom are enrolled in professional or semi-professional courses such as engineering, business administration, industrial relations, post-graduate medical courses, etc. The ratio in the liberal arts and cultural classes in Extension is much the same as in the discussion groups. In six selected areas – art, literature, history, foreign languages, music and psychology – the enrollments in Extension are 62 per cent female. Thus the sex ratio in the liberal arts discussion programs parallels the ratio in Extension liberal arts courses. This follows the general pattern in adult education courses in the humanities, in concert attendance and other cultural activities where women typically tend to outnumber men.

Seventy-nine per cent of those interviewed were married, 12 per cent were single, the rest were widowed or divorced. Almost half (73 of the 150 interviewed) had enrolled with their husbands or wives. The great majority of the men in the program were married, 91 per cent as compared with 72 per cent of the women.

The percentage of married persons in the discussion groups was considerably higher than in regular UCLA extension courses, where it is approximately 62 per cent. This is partially attributable to the fact that the age distribution, as we shall see, is higher in the discussion groups. But it is very probable that the large number of couples enrolling in the discussion groups is an important factor. While the Extension Division has no official data on the number of couples in the class program, from the observations of class organizers and instructors it is not nearly so high as in the discussion groups. It is probably not more than 15 per cent at most.

The median age of participants was 38.5. It is interesting to note that there were more participants over age 45 than there were under the age of 31. The age distribution in the Whittier and Los Angeles discussion program annual reports follows the same pattern except that in Whittier the number falling in the 31 to 45 age group was even higher, 66 per cent compared to 60 per cent in the study sample. The median age in Pasadena for all participants in that period was the highest of the three areas, 45.1.

Enrollments in the Extension Division's regular classes reflect a much younger age distribution, the median being 33. Over 40 per cent are under age 30 as compared with 14 per cent in the discussion program. At the upper age level 24 per cent in Extension classes are over age 40 as compared with 44 per cent in that category in the discussion program.

One of the major reasons for this difference in age distribution is undoubtedly the fact that a large percentage of Extension offerings, as previously indicated, are in business, professional and semi-professional fields. In addition, the majority of Extension classes carry University credit. Many of the students are therefore pursuing Extension courses for occupational, professional or career purposes and would naturally tend to fall into the lower age categories. It would appear, then, that through the discussion programs the Extension Division is attracting older people than do the typical Extension classes, as well as a greater percentage of married persons and couples.

Participants in the discussion groups tend to have considerably more education than average. While 12 per cent of those interviewed had had up to a high school education, the great majority, 88 per cent, had had some schooling beyond high school. And of the 150 in the sample, 59 per cent had college degrees. Of these, 13 had Master's degrees; nine had law degrees; six were M.D.'s; two were Ph.D.'s and two had dental degrees.

The fact that the educational distribution described above fairly represents the educational backgrounds of participants in the discussion programs in the area under study, and is not due to errors in sampling, is borne out by the Los Angeles, Pasadena, and Whittier reports of that same year. That it may also be typical of comparable discussion groups in other parts of the country is indicated by the annual report of the American Foundation for Political Education for the year ending June 30, 1955. The A.F.P.E. report covered 782 participants in Foundation discussion groups throughout the country.

*Percentage of Discussion Group Participants In Various Programs Having Schooling Beyond High School**

Study Sample	88%
Los Angeles Report	80
Pasadena Report	90
Whittier Report	89
A.F.P.E. Report	80

*The Los Angeles, Pasadena and Whittier reports did not include data on degrees. The A.F.P.E. reported 68 per cent with Bachelor's or advanced degrees.

It is apparent, then, that the people who typically participate in liberal arts discussion programs have already had a great deal of formal schooling.

As for the educational background of women in the program as compared with men, 45.7 per cent had college degrees in contrast to 82.2 per cent of the men.

The occupations of the participants reflect their high degree of education. The housewife category was sizable, of course, because of the high percentage of women in the program.

Occupation	*Percentage of Participants*
Housewife	38.0
Professional	34.7
Business Executive	4.0
Employer-Proprietor	3.3
Supervisory	5.3
White-collar — Sales	12.7
Skilled worker	1.3
Student	.7

Aside from housewives, the majority of participants were in the professions and in higher business or supervisory positions. In view of the large percentage of the American work force in white-collar and sales jobs, the percentage of participants in these occupations is noticeably small. Also notable is the complete absence of industrial or manual workers and the extremely small percentage of skilled workers.

It should be mentioned that in the case of interviewees who were housewives, while the occupations of their husbands were not always secured, in those instances where they were reported they tended to follow the occupational pattern of the men in the sample.

In view of the educational level and the occupations of discussion group members, it is not surprising that the reported family incomes of participants were also considerably above average. The median annual income was $9500. Forty-six per cent earned more than $10,000 a year and 28 per cent reported incomes in excess of $15,000 a year.

Leisure Time Interests and Activities

More than half of the participants interviewed were active in community activities or organizations ranging from P.T.A. and civic organizations to church work. Twenty-eight per cent reported no organizational affiliations and 18 per cent reported nominal but not active memberships.

Church memberships were higher in Whittier and Pasadena than among the Los Angeles participants. On the other hand, the percentage of those active in political organizations was greater in Los Angeles.

The participants in the Los Angeles area, in the experience of the administrators of the program, tend to be predominantly liberal and Democrats, politically. This is not so true of Pasadena and Whittier, particularly the latter, where, according to the Director, a fairly high percentage of Republicans was enrolled. It was not deemed desirable to ask the interviewees their political affiliations but they were asked how they would classify themselves in terms of being Liberal, Middle-of-the-Road, or Conservative. As can be seen from the table below, the participants in Whittier divided almost equally into the three classifications. In Los Angeles and Pasadena the Liberal designations were considerably higher and the Conservative considerably lower. This was particularly true of the Los Angeles participants.

Self-Classification of Participants

	Total	*Los Angeles*	*Whittier*	*Pasadena*
Liberal	56.0%	62.0%	36.0%	52.0%
Middle-of-the-Road	29.3	30.0	32.0	24.0
Conservative	13.4	8.0	32.0	16.0
Couldn't Say	1.3	0.4	0.4	0.5

In asking the question above, the terms were not defined. Obviously, such words as "liberal" or "conservative" have different meanings for different people. But what was sought here was their self-perception in these terms according to common usage.

Interestingly enough, the results are pretty much what the area directors estimated (in advance of the study), in describing the participants.

Of the 150 participants, more than half considered themselves "liberal" and less than 15 per cent described themselves as "conservative." Los Angeles had the largest number describing themselves as "liberal" and Whittier the largest percentage designating themselves as "conservative."

The general experience with this type of program is that it tends to attract those with "liberal" points of view and has considerable difficulty in attracting those with more conservative attitudes. One of the criticisms of the Los Angeles groups has been that their members tended to think too much alike.

The composition of the Whittier groups, which had a more even distribution in the three categories, was due in part to the nature of the community itself. But in terms of numbers, certainly Los Angeles and Pasadena had plenty of "conservatives" to draw upon. It was much easier in the latter communities, however, to fill their groups without taking pains to enlist the support of the "conservatives." In Whittier, an outstanding job was done in gaining the support of the most conservative organizations in the community for the program. Had similar steps been taken in Los Angeles, perhaps a better balance might have been achieved – although, because of the size of the city, it would admittedly have been a more difficult task.

Participants in the Los Angeles groups expressed the view that they were too much alike and that greater diversity in viewpoint would have made the discussions more profitable. A number of Whittier participants, on the other hand, stressed the great diversity of viewpoints as being the most valuable aspect of the discussion. Remarked one Whittier participant in a World Affairs group:

> "We ranged all the way from corporation vice-presidents to retired missionaries. Politically, we had a terrific range – even an apologist for Franco."

The average number of books read by discussion group members was one a month. More than a third (36 per cent) reported that they read three books a month or more. About an equal number (37 per cent) read less than one book a month. None reported reading less than two books a year.

Admittedly, interviewees may tend to exaggerate the number of books they read each month. This is less likely to have occurred in this instance, however, because the interviewees were asked the titles and authors of the books they had recently read.

Book reading among the participants was far greater than among the general population. In a Gallup Poll on reading reported in the *Los Angeles Times,* August 15, 1955, the percentages of persons in the general population who had not read a book in a given period were as follows:

> 84% had not read a book in the preceding week;
> 73% had not read a book in the preceding month;
> 61% had not read a book in the preceding year.

Of course the participants represented a much higher educational distribution than that of the general population. But even when compared on the basis of educational background (acknowledging the differences in the basis of reporting) it is apparent from the following data that book reading among the participants tended to be higher than among other persons of similar educational background. According to the same poll of the general population, the percentages by educational background of those who had not read a book in the preceding year were:

College	26%
High School	57%
Grade School	82%

Those interviewed were asked the titles and authors of the last three books they had read. These were then classified as "light literature" (including popular fiction and non-fiction), "serious fiction" and "serious non-fiction." Admittedly the classification of the reported books into these categories was difficult and sometimes arbitrary. On the basis of these classifications, 54 per cent read "light literature," 39 per cent "serious fiction" and 53 per cent "serious non-fiction."

In the reading of magazines and periodic literature, 70 per cent read popular magazines (*Life, Look,* home magazines, etc.), 60 per cent read news periodicals (*Time, U.S. News, Newsweek,* etc.), and 60 per cent read serious periodicals. In the latter were included periodicals like the *Saturday Review, Harper's, Foreign Affairs,* and scholarly or professional journals. Of course, there was considerable overlapping – some 20 per cent reading all three. Also no information was secured on the amount of time spent on reading the periodicals in the different classifications.

But it is clear that both as regards books and periodicals, the cases in the sample reflect a population that reads more than average and tends to read more serious things.

The median time per week spent by participants watching television was 3.9 hours. Fifty per cent spent from one to six hours a week at the T.V. sets and 17 per cent did not watch television at all. On the other hand, 10 per cent devoted more than 12 hours a week to it.

Compared with the general population, time spent by participants in the discussion groups watching television was very low. The average number of hours of T.V. viewing per day reported by A. C. Nielsen in 1955 was 4.9*. Thus, the *daily* average for the general population was greater than the *weekly* average for the participants.

This large discrepancy was not due to lack of time alone on the part of discussion group members, but to the nature and quality of most T.V. programs. In answer to the question, "Which programs do you watch regularly?" the interviewees specified the programs by name. These were then classified as "popular" or "cultural, educational." Categorizing some of the programs was sometimes difficult and no doubt there was a margin of error. Many, of course, watched programs in both categories. Of the 150 persons interviewed, 87 per cent reported that they watched certain "popular" programs regularly and 70 per cent reported that they watched specified "cultural or educational" programs. Frequently mentioned among the latter were *Omnibus,* University-sponsored programs, *Cavalcade of Books,* etc. There was widespread complaint about the paucity of good programs, such as *Director's Showcase,* and disappointment over the quality of even some of the more serious drama programs – *Climax, Playhouse 90,* and the like – although a large percentage watched them.

---

*Leo Bogart, *The Age of Television.* New York: Frederick Ungar, 1956.

This obviously suggests the possibility of an audience for better T.V. programs. Unfortunately the Los Angeles area does not have an educational T.V. station. There is little doubt but that there would be a sizable audience for such a station in Metropolitan Los Angeles. The possibility of securing one at this late date is rather remote. On the other hand, there is little question but that if the educational institutions in the area would get together and formulate an imaginative program, cooperation and time could be secured from the commercial stations. UCLA and the University of Southern California have already had several experimental programs on commercial stations with good response. Were additional programs initiated, they could be tied in with the Liberal Arts programs to the advantage of the latter and they in turn would supply a good core audience.

The interviewees were also asked to specify the last three motion picture films they had seen, the frequency with which they attended motion pictures and the kind of films they liked.

In terms of frequency, approximately ten per cent reported that they rarely went to motion picture theatres. A majority (56.7 per cent) saw less than one motion picture a month, 28 per cent saw one or two pictures a month, and only three per cent saw more than two pictures a month.

The following table describes the last three motion pictures attended and the kind of films liked best:

Last Three Films Seen and Type of Films Preferred

Classification	*Last Three Films Seen*	*Type of Film Preferred*
None (and could not remember or no preference)	13.2%	12.7%
Light	54.7	58.0
Serious	56.7	56.0
Art or Foreign	15.4	36.0

Note that for more than half the participants their actual film attendance and their preference were almost identical in regard to "Light" and "Serious" films. In regard to "Art and Foreign" films, their preference exceeded attendance by more than two to one. The discrepancy is no doubt attributable to the fact that comparatively few such films are shown in the Los Angeles area. For that matter, the relative percentages of those viewing "Light" and "Serious" films are also affected by the availability of films in each category.

Although reliable statistics are not available as to the average preference or taste in the matter of films, it seems likely that the habits and tastes of this sample were of a higher order than average.

Adult Education Activities

To determine whether participants in discussion groups were people who typically engage in such activities, they were asked whether they had been in discussion groups before and whether they had taken any courses or classes within a three-year period prior to their registering in the discussion program.

The majority (64.7 per cent) had never participated in any discussion groups before. But a surprisingly large number, more than a third, had been in some type of discussion group before.

Previous Participation in Discussion Groups

None	64.7%
Liberal Arts	10.7
World Politics	3.3
Great Books	7.3
Occupation-connected	1.3
Other*	9.3
More than one	3.3

*These were, in the main, discussion groups in women's organizations and churches.

Furthermore, 16 per cent of the total had been in programs sponsored by the Liberal Arts Centers. This figure is fairly close to the re-enrollments characteristic of the American Foundation for Political Education programs in which approximately 20 per cent of those in the World Politics program continue on into the American Foreign Policy program. In view of the fact that enrollments in the period being studied were considerably higher than in the previous year, calculated as a percentage of the total of that year, the number previously in Center discussion groups would represent an even higher percentage of re-enrollments than the 20 per cent in the A.F.P.E. program. As a matter of fact, Whittier reported re-enrollments as high as 40 per cent of the total. This is significant indeed. For, in the last analysis, if these programs are to have a serious educational impact it will not occur in ten two-hour meetings.

As for courses or classes taken within the three years prior to the discussion group, somewhat more than half (56.7 per cent) responded affirmatively. A quarter of the sample had taken a cultural course unrelated to a degree, credential or occupation.

It is evident, then, that a large percentage of those in the discussion groups consists of adults who have a history of participation and interest in courses, classes and discussion groups. This, together with their high degree of formal education, book reading and income, as compared to the general population, might lead some to conclude that the programs are attracting those adults who need them least. As compared with the general population, this may be partially true but only if we think of "need" as applied to those who have less as compared with those who have more education. For if there is anything we have learned about education and particularly adult education and cultural activities generally, it is that the more educational experience, intellectual growth and exposure to cultural activities a person has had, the more he feels the need for continuing and ever-deepening experiences in the realms of thought, ideas and aesthetics.

Nor can we assume the absence of need in the first sense merely because a person has had a considerable amount of formal schooling. Much of our collegiate and graduate schooling is presently so specialized and narrowly oriented towards occupational or professional careers it has assumed the character of training rather than education. As we shall see later, many enrolled in the Liberal Arts programs precisely for this reason.

Finally, we should not overlook the fact that a percentage of the participants did not have a great deal of formal schooling, and that even though more than half had taken adult courses previously, only 25 per cent had taken them in the humanities.

Programs such as these develop in expanding ripples, broader segments of the population being involved as the program grows. But without the core of the better educated, the already committed, such programs would not be viable. Nor should we underestimate the perennial need of all minds and spirits, regardless of previous schooling, for continuing and constant refreshment and replenishment.

Reasons for Enrolling

Adults engaging in educational activities, particularly those of a non-credit and non-vocational nature, do so for various reasons. This was apparent in the replies to the question, "Why did you enroll?" In a few instances the interviewees were not entirely certain, generally replying, "It just seemed as though it might be interesting." In others, the major reasons given may

Reasons for Enrolling

REASON	Individuals		Total Replies	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
1) Interested in subject matter..........	18	12.0	71	47.3
2) Exchange of views and discussion.....	7	4.7	58	38.7
3) Self-enrichment – intellectual stimulus.	28	18.7	73	48.7
4) Social – to meet people, be with friends	7	4.7	32	21.3
5) (1) and (2).........................	27	18.0		
6) (1) and (3).........................	18	12.0		
7) (1) and (4).........................	8	5.3		
8) (2) and (3).........................	17	11.3		
9) (2) or (3) and (4)	17	11.3		
10) No answer – or couldn't say..........	3	2.0	3	2.0
	150	100.0		

not always have been the most compelling. But most of the persons interviewed were quite articulate and specific as to their reasons for enrolling, and frequently mentioned several reasons. These fell into the four general categories used in the following table. The categories are not all mutually exclusive but indicate a particular emphasis.

Eighty-seven of those interviewed gave more than one reason for enrolling. The table presents the replies by individuals and the total number of replies in each category.

The greater number of participants, almost half in each case, were motivated by interest in the subject matter or in self-enrichment and intellectual stimulus, while a lesser percentage (38.7 per cent) was attracted by the discussion aspect of the program. And of the 58 participants who gave the latter as a reason for enrolling, only seven gave that reason alone, the remainder giving other reasons as well. On the other hand, 46 who gave but a single reason, gave subject matter interest or self-enrichment and intellectual stimulus as the reason. Of course, some undoubtedly expected the latter to result from the discussion and exchange of views. The criticism and reservations expressed in regard to the materials and the leadership, however (as will be shown later), would indicate that the majority came to acquire more information and knowledge. On the other hand, it must be realized that their motivations and expectations were conditioned by more formal and traditional educational experiences.

The social attraction, while a weaker motivating factor, was not inconsiderable — being cited by one-fifth of the participants. But in this instance, too, only seven gave it as the sole reason for enrolling. It should be realized in connection with the social motivation that it was not just to meet people, any people, but to meet people with the kinds of interests represented in the Liberal Arts Programs.

The general categories used, while useful for summarization, do not fully describe the reasons and motivations for enrolling as reported by the interviewees. Many (29) sought intellectual stimulus because they felt they were stagnating or were "in a rut," others (16) felt their backgrounds were too narrow or too specialized. In 11 cases, the fact that it was a worthwhile experience in which husbands and wives could participate was cited. Several mentioned the pressure of spouses or friends as one of the reasons for enrolling. But in every case, they were glad they had done so. Among those who joined for social reasons, some indicated they were new in the community and hoped to meet congenial people. Three single women joined because they thought there would be eligible bachelors in the group. There may, of course, have been other single women who enrolled for the same reason but were not as frank. Two men, while giving other reasons too, thought the social contacts would be useful in business. Five persons thought they would learn to express themselves better and would learn discussion skills. Finally, four participants enrolled because they felt that the discussion of serious problems was important for the preservation of the democratic process.

Engineers and technicians in the sample were especially concerned with the narrowness of their background.

One engineer stated:

> "I had little chance in my engineering training to get any contact with the humanities, although they did try to cram a little down our throats. I liked it but never had the time to look into the matter further. This seemed like a good introduction to the humanities and offered a good chance to see if I was interested in going into the matter further. Also, since we knew these friends quite well and liked to be with them, we also decided to take part for social reasons. It was also something that my wife and I could do together."

Another engineer commented:

> "I enrolled because I felt my education at M.I.T. had been completely warped. I wanted to become a more well-rounded person. I thought the discussion group would provide a means of self-expression in areas where I don't usually have a chance to do anything. It was a chance to get outside the ordinary line of chatter you get into with friends. Furthermore, it's stimulating to broaden one's thinking by discussion rather than just in the form of reading."

Concern with the narrowness of their formal schooling, training or work was not limited to engineers. Two doctors, a lawyer, a musician, and a utility executive, as well as several in other occupations, expressed similar views.

A number of housewives voiced especially strong feelings about wanting to "get out of a rut," some adding that they wanted to keep abreast of their husbands or develop some serious interests in common. One housewife said:

> "My husband has had considerably more education than I and I wanted to sort of keep up with him and not get bogged down in domesticity, which isn't too interesting for a husband to come home to at night. I also wanted to talk to someone who was over five or ten years old."

Another woman, the wife of a doctor, replied:

> "I had gotten into a rut taking care of a small child for the past three and a half years. Both my husband and I thought it would be good to do something together. I can't enter his medical field."

Of the four who gave as one of their reasons for enrolling, the importance of discussion to the democratic process, three represented liberal points of view and expressed concern over civil liberties, freedom of expression, the tendency toward conformity in the United States in recent years and the necessity for free discussion and exchange of opinions in a democracy. The fourth, a doctor in a World Politics group, while giving the same reason, had somewhat different concerns and was obviously at a point of reassessing his ideas and values. This was apparent throughout the three interviews held with him. There were several participants in much the same situation and in some ways the discussions had the greatest impact on them. Among the observations made by the doctor were these:

> "Well, I'm getting sort of worried about democracy. I'm afraid Americans are getting soft. We know that the Russians are winning a lot of athletic events and things like that. I'm not worried about our ability to manufacture things. But I'm worried about our softness.
>
> "I would like to see more emphasis on freedom and a little less emphasis on security. We're all trying to socialize ourselves. We know that labor is getting together, etc. I'm in favor of the status quo in medicine, but if you ask me frankly, I have the feeling that medicine as we know it is a dead duck. It's too expensive for one thing. Of course, I'm going along with the tide on this. I'm not charging any less to make it less expensive. A lot of doctors are starting to band together to socialize themselves. Why? So that they can have more free time and don't have to work so hard. I can't even sell medicine to my own family. My boys say they don't want to be doctors because you have to work too hard."

Then, when asked how the discussion group would help in regard to the above, he replied:

> "Well, I thought this would help make me better informed. As I've said before, I don't get around to reading much. I thought joining a group like this would help to get me to read and to make me better informed."

In brief, participants in the discussion groups enrolled for a number of reasons: they felt their backgrounds or current preoccupations were too narrow, limited or superficial; they wanted to increase their knowledge and explore ideas and views that were intellectually stimulating; they wanted to develop and pursue more serious interests with spouses and friends and possibly make new friends having similar interests.

There was little difference between men and women in the reasons given for enrolling. The largest difference was among those who enrolled because they were interested in discussion and exchange of views. But even here the difference was not very great, five per cent more women than men giving this reason.

In measuring educational background against other factors or characteristics, just the two categories, college graduates and non-college graduates, will be used. The more detailed breakdown based on years of schooling frequently provided too few cases in some of the categories to permit valid comparisons. Actually, the differences between college graduates and non-graduates in this population are probably less than in the general population. Even among the 61 who had not been graduated from college, only 18 had had twelve years of schooling or less. The rest had had some schooling beyond high school.

There were no very great differences between college graduates and non-graduates in three of the four categories. There was a significant difference, however, in the category, "Exchange of views and discussion." Fifteen per cent more of the college graduates than the non-college graduates gave this as a reason for enrolling. It may be conjectured (and data to be presented further on tends to lend support) that those with higher education were more interested in the discussion aspect because for them this was the unique aspect of the program. Having considerable formal education, had they been primarily interested in factual information they would have taken one of the more traditional extension or adult courses or, as some actually stated, would have read by themselves. A somewhat higher percentage of non-college graduates, on the other hand, gave interest in the subject matter as a reason for enrolling.

Most participants learned about the program by word of mouth (42 per cent) or through the brochures mailed out by the Centers (41 per cent). Despite considerable newspaper publicity, only seven per cent learned of the program through the newspapers. Eight per cent learned of it through organizations.

A large majority of participants (75 per cent) enrolled in the discussion groups with a spouse or friends. Almost half enrolled with their husbands or wives and of these approximately a third enrolled with friends in addition to their mates. Aside from couples, slightly more than a quarter enrolled with friends. It is clear that the activity involved social relationships for many of the participants at the very outset.

Attitude Toward Sponsorship of the Program

As previously indicated, the Liberal Arts Discussion Programs in the Metropolitan Los Angeles area are sponsored by three different institutions or agencies. Interviewees were asked several questions concerning the sponsorship of the programs, first, to determine whether the identity of the sponsoring agency had any effect on the attractiveness of the program for prospective enrollees, and, second, to get some notion as to how participants would view civic group or public school sponsorship of the programs. The latter was prompted by the problem of costs and the limited range of the population now being reached by the programs.

During the period of the interviews, fees were $12.00 per enrollee and $18.00 per couple for ten meetings. The income from fees does not support the total budget. Nor is it likely that the programs can be made self-supporting from fees alone. Once Fund for Adult Education grants come to an end, other means of subsidization will be necessary if the programs are to continue. At the same time it is apparent that participants tend to be of higher than average economic status. Conceivably the size of the fee was a deterrent to some prospective participants. (Actually a number of the participants interviewed stated that they thought the fees were too high.) On the other hand, California's public adult education programs in high schools and junior colleges are extensive and charge only nominal fees or no fees at all. This is also true of many public school adult education programs in other parts of the country. If adults could be equally attracted to public-school-sponsored liberal arts discussion programs, the base of participation might be considerably broadened.

Because in various parts of the country some discussion groups are sponsored by civic groups, the participants were also asked whether they would have enrolled if a civic group had sponsored the program.

In order not to have their responses toward alternative sponsorship influenced by a prior statement of their views concerning the current sponsorship, the former were elicited first.

Participants were asked whether they would have enrolled if the public adult school in their community, the junior college, or a civic group had sponsored the program. They were then asked whether the current sponsorship (depending upon the area – the University, Whittier College, or the Pasadena Liberal Arts Center) made the program more attractive to them.

Answers to the question of alternative sponsorship were as follows:

Attitude Toward Participation If Some Other Agency Had Sponsored the Group

Agency	*Yes*	*No*	*Maybe*	*Couldn't Say*	*Total*
Public Adult Evening School	46.0%	30.2%	21.2%	2.6%	100%
Junior College Adult School	52.0	22.0	22.0	4.0	100
Civic Group	42.7	27.3	26.7	3.3	100

While projection of behavior under given hypothetical circumstances is not entirely reliable, it has some significance in terms of attitude toward the different agencies. Although the differences were not very great, it is interesting to note that the highest percentage of interviewees (52.0 per cent) indicated that they would have enrolled had the Junior College sponsored the group, a lesser percentage (46.0 per cent) if the Public Adult Evening School had sponsored it, and still fewer (42.7 per cent) if a Civic Group had sponsored it. The Junior College, a higher-level educational institution, had more appeal than the Public Adult School. As to Civic Group sponsorship, many indicated that it would depend on the nature of the Civic Group. This is reflected in the largest percentage answering "Maybe" in regard to Civic Group sponsorship.

The importance of the educational prestige of the sponsoring agency for the sampled population is more clearly indicated in the replies to the question: "Did the fact that the University (or Whittier College, or the Pasadena Liberal Arts Center) sponsors these groups make it more attractive to you?" The answers were as follows:

Institution	*Number*	*Yes*	*No*	*Maybe*	*Couldn't Say*
University of California, Los Angeles	100	81.0%	15.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Whittier College	25	64.0	32.0	4.0	0.0
Pasadena Liberal Arts Center	25	36.00	48.0	4.0	12.0

Despite the small size of the samples in the Whittier and Pasadena areas, the differences between the areas are significant. In the Los Angeles sample a very large majority (81.0 per cent) indicated that University of California sponsorship made the program more attractive to them. In Whittier, where Whittier College has considerable prestige but not quite the prestige of the University, almost two-thirds indicated that the College sponsorship made the program more attractive. In Pasadena, where a new citizens' agency, scarcely known to many people, was set up specifically to sponsor the program, just a little over a third of the participants found the program more attractive because of the Center's sponsorship. At the same time 12 per cent in Pasadena replied they "couldn't say." The greater success of the Los Angeles and Whittier programs, in number and size of groups, is probably partially due to the nature of their sponsorship.

The comments of interviewees in addition to their "yes" and "no" answers further support the importance attached to the sponsoring agency in the Los Angeles and Whittier areas. In Los Angeles more than a third commented that University sponsorship "guaranteed the quality of the program" or "the University wouldn't sponsor it if it weren't worth while" or they were "sure the leadership would be good if the University sponsored it." In Whittier almost a third made similar comments, whereas few such comments with reference to the Center were made in the Pasadena sample.

It would appear, then, that the educational level and prestige of the sponsoring institution was important for many of the participants. It does not mean, however, that liberal arts discussion programs could not be offered with success by the public adult schools or the junior colleges. It must be remembered that the participants in this program had had a considerable amount of formal education, the majority being college graduates, to whom university or college sponsorship would be appealing. Evening adult schools or junior colleges, on the other hand, in view of their considerably lower fees, might well attract a wider range of participants. This might be true not only because of the fee differential but also because people of less formal education might feel that a university-sponsored program would be above their heads. As a matter of fact, one woman of comparatively little formal education in the Los Angeles sample, when asked whether University sponsorship made the discussion group more attractive to her, replied, "I don't think so. If I had thought much about it, it might have frightened me off. I wouldn't have been sure that I could understand it." Furthermore, even in the highly select group represented in the sample, approximately 50 per cent indicated that they would have enrolled if a public adult school or junior college had sponsored the groups and an additional 20 per cent or more indicated that they might have.

At the same time, however, there is little question, both on the basis of the replies and the experience of the Center directors, but that many currently enrolled would not enroll if the programs were sponsored by the public adult schools or junior colleges. Presumably this would be true of other prospective enrollees of higher education.

One may conclude from the above that while the sponsorship of the discussion programs by higher educational institutions is probably essential if large numbers of university-trained adults are to be attracted, it may be well to explore the possibility of public adult schools and junior colleges offering liberal arts discussion programs so that broader segments of the adult population may be reached. Offering the programs on different levels would also make it possible to use differentiated materials and leadership and provide as well for progression in the different subject-matter fields. But more of the latter when we discuss the materials, leadership and meetings in the following sections.

Part Three

VIEWS OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE DISCUSSION GROUP EXPERIENCE

VIEWS OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE DISCUSSION GROUP EXPERIENCE

To discover the reactions and attitudes of participants toward the discussion experience more than forty questions were asked of them regarding the discussion, the leadership, the materials, the meeting place and what they felt they derived from it. Some of the questions overlapped but represented different emphases.

In this section, replies to many of the specific questions are presented, as well as representative or deviant comments, and breakdowns according to program and relevant socio-economic factors.

Degree to Which Expectations Were Met

	Total	Sex		Education	
		Male	*Female*	*College Grad.*	*Non-College Grad.*
Number	150	56	94	89	61
Yes	52.0%	58.9%	47.9%	53.9%	49.2%
Partially	30.0	21.4	35.1	29.2	31.1
No	18.0	19.7	17.0	16.9	19.7

For the great majority (over 80 per cent), the discussion groups either fulfilled their expectations or did so partially. Among those answering "Yes," 25 per cent indicated that the experience exceeded their expectations. Somewhat over half of the total interviewed were well satisfied with the program but almost a third were only partially satisfied and somewhat less than a fifth were disappointed in it.

More men than women gave unqualified replies in the affirmative. On the other hand, somewhat more men (2.7 per cent) than women gave completely negative responses. The most notable difference between men and women was in the category "Partially," 14 per cent more women than men answering in this category.

Differences between college graduates and non-graduates were not nearly so great as between men and women. It will be remembered that there were a great many more college graduates among the men than among the women so that a similar degree of difference might well have been expected in the two breakdowns. But this was not the case. The differences between the male and female responses in the "Yes" and "Partially" categories are clearly significant.

Some of the reasons for the difference between men and women in fulfillment of expectations with respect to the discussion groups are suggested by the replies to some of the subsequent questions. One that might be hazarded here, however, is the fact that among many of the men educational or intellectual experiences were less frequent than among the women. For example, in reply to the question concerning classes or courses taken during the three previous years, approximately two-thirds of the women had taken courses as against 45 per cent of the men so reporting. Again, in regard to number of books read each month, 50 per cent of the men reported reading less than one book a month as compared with 29 per cent of the women. And among the men much of the reading was professional or occupational. The discussion groups for the men tended to be a new and refreshing experience, a welcome change from the demands of their work and they were, therefore, less critical so long as they liked the program at all.

The greatest differences in regard to fulfillment of expectations appeared when the responses were broken down according to the discussion program in which they had participated.

Expectations Met According to Program

Program	*Number*	*Yes*	*Partially*	*No*
World Affairs	38	44.7%	31.6%	23.7%
Humanities	38	36.8	42.2	21.0
World Politics	37	70.2	16.3	13.5
Ways of Mankind	37	56.7	29.8	13.5

Whereas 70 per cent of those in World Politics groups gave completely affirmative replies, only 37 per cent of those in Humanities groups so replied. Larger percentages of the participants in the other two programs gave "Yes" replies than in the Humanities but they, too, were considerably lower than among World Politics participants. The differences between programs in the completely negative replies were not nearly so great, the "No" replies in both World Politics and Ways of Mankind being identical.

The greater satisfaction with the World Politics program and the dissatisfaction with the Humanities and World Affairs programs are largely attributable to the materials. As we shall see later, the pattern of responses to the questions concerning the materials was similar to that in the table above. An additional reason for the greater satisfaction with the World Politics program, however, may have been the fact that it is the only program which consistently used two trained co-leaders in each group. This tended to provoke greater discussion as well as the expression of a greater variety of viewpoints. Furthermore, in groups having one discussion leader, if the leader was poor, the group suffered. Where two leaders were used it was not likely that both would be poor.

Aspects of Discussion Group Which Participants Liked Most

Discussion — exchange of views	52.0%
Intellectual stimulus	19.3
Subject matter	25.3
Social aspects	17.3
Other	13.4

There is little question that for more than half the participants the discussion aspects of the program were the most attractive. Even among those who stated that they liked the intellectual stimulus most, many were implicitly referring to the discussion and exchange of views as providing the stimulus, although others in that category had the materials or stimulating qualities of the leader in mind.

In the category "Other," four stated that what they liked best was the fact that it was something worthwhile that husbands and wives could do together. Six remarked that they liked the variety of backgrounds represented in the group. Five liked the leadership best and the remaining five liked certain aspects of the materials. Among the latter were two who liked the music sessions in the Humanities program because of the specialists who had been brought in to handle that section of the materials.

As between replies of men and women there were no great differences in the categories "Intellectual stimulus" and "Social aspects," but 59 per cent of the men reported they liked the discussion best as against 47 per cent of the women. Similarly, more men (32.2 per cent) reported they liked the subject matter best as compared to 21.3 per cent of the women.

What Participants Liked Least

The materials	21.0%
The leadership	22.7
Inadequacy of the participants	31.3
Other	17.3
No criticism	18.0

The greatest number, almost a third, were critical of the other participants. They felt that many of the participants were not sufficiently well informed, that many made irrelevant contributions to the discussions, that some came too biased in their views and that a number talked too much and tried to dominate the discussions. Some of the criticism in this category might as justifiably have been directed at the leader for not having exerted greater control over the discussion.

Somewhat over a fifth of the participants liked the materials least and an approximately similar number liked the leadership least. General reactions to the materials and leadership will be discussed in greater detail later. But in answering the question above, most of the criticisms of the materials were in regard to specific sections of some of the materials, such as the music section in the Humanities, the films in the World Affairs program, or the fact that the readings were too long in the World Politics program. Criticism of the leadership was largely to the effect that it was not strong enough or sufficiently well informed in the subject matter under discussion.

Under "Other," three in each case liked least the fact that the group rarely arrived at conclusions, that the group was too small, or that although interesting issues were raised there was not enough time to pursue them. Other things liked least, as reported by single individuals, were the poor recording equipment, lateness of the meetings, the meeting place, the lack of controversy, and "going to a new house for each meeting and having to look for the place."

There were no significant differences between men and women as to the aspects of the discussion experience they liked least. In the breakdown by education there were no significant differences in three of the four categories of replies. But with reference to the "inadequacy of the participants," 36 per cent of those with college degrees liked this least as compared with 24 per cent of the non-college graduates. The college graduates tended to be more concerned with the quality of the contributions to the discussion made by participants. It would seem to challenge the assumption that any and all adults, regardless of broad differences in background, can be thrown together for discussion equally profitable to all. This issue was raised in at least a dozen cases by participants who had somewhat better than average backgrounds in the subject-matter areas under discussion. They felt that the wide disparity of backgrounds enforced a low common denominator in the discussions. They thought the discussions were too elementary, and too frequently dealt with the obvious. They wished groups of participants with more comparable backgrounds in the subject matter might be formed so that the discussions would be on a higher level.

This suggests the desirability of having groups on different levels, possibly with different materials in each of the subject-matter areas, and adequate counseling so as to guide discussion-group members into appropriate groups.

Did Participants Learn Anything That Was Useful?

Discussion techniques	23.3%
See problems with greater objectivity – more tolerant of other opinions	16.7
Enriched general background	26.7
Other	20.0
No	22.7

The great majority of participants, almost four-fifths of them, felt that they had gained skills, insights or subject-matter knowledge which they felt were useful to them in other connections. The largest number (26.7 per cent) felt that the experience was most useful in a general way, in that it enriched their background. But they saw this as being useful in other connections, in stimulating their interest in particular areas, improving their tastes and in making them more discriminating. Almost as many found the discussion techniques themselves useful in their organizational work and on their jobs. Some of the men cited the utility of the discussion method in their staff meetings and one man attributed a promotion he had received to his ability at conference leadership, a skill he felt he achieved by having participated in several of the discussion groups. Three teachers and two librarians felt the materials and knowledge they had gained were useful in their work.

Under "Other" were three who reported that the Ways of Mankind discussions had helped them understand their children and families better. Some (5) felt they had gained more insight and learned new approaches to art and literature. One of these added that she now reads with greater understanding and that her interest in reading better literature has been stimulated. Five participants stated that the discussions had influenced their conversations with friends during social evenings, that they talked about some of the ideas raised in the discussions and that in general they now tended to talk about more serious and meaningful things with their friends. (This point was also made by others in answering other questions.)

Although the interviewees were asked directly in subsequent questioning whether they thought that the other participants became more open-minded and whether they themselves had become more open-minded as a result of the discussion experience, it is not without significance that in answer to the above questions 17 per cent volunteered that they now view problems more objectively and are more tolerant of the opinions of others.

There were no great differences by education or sex in the replies to the question, "Did you learn anything that was useful elsewhere?", except in the category "Enriched general background." Here, 11 per cent more women than men so reported. Generally, the men tended to be more specific in their replies.

The Leadership

Interviewees were asked to rate the leader of their discussion group as excellent, good, fair or poor. They were then asked what was good and what was poor about the leadership. The following table presents the total replies in percentages and the breakdowns according to education and sex:

Effectiveness of the Leadership

		Education		Sex	
	Total	*Non-College Graduate*	*College Graduate*	*Male*	*Female*
No. of Cases	150	61	89	56	94
Excellent	25.3%	23.0%	27.0%	26.8%	24.5%
Good	34.1	29.5	37.1	30.4	26.2
Fair	27.2	36.0	21.4	23.2	29.7
Poor	13.4	11.5	14.6	19.6	9.6

The significant fact is that, although leaders were used who were not expert in the subject-matter fields and who had received but one or two days of leadership training, only 13.4 per cent of the participants thought the leadership was poor, whereas 59.4 per cent thought the leadership was excellent or good. One suspects that were regular subject-matter teachers in adult classes evaluated by their students, they might not fare any better. The non-college graduates were more critical of the leadership than the college graduates, 48 per cent of the former stating that they thought the leadership was fair or poor in contrast to 36 per cent of the college graduates. This was largely due to the non-college graduates' preferring stronger leadership and in many instances, as we shall see later, wishing the leader were a subject-matter specialist who could provide more information and answer questions. The college graduates tended to feel less dependent on the leader. As between men and women, the greatest divergence was in the percentage rating the leadership "poor." Twice as many men as women rated the leaders "poor."

As in the case of fulfillment of expectation, participant feeling about the effectiveness of the leadership, as the following table suggests, was not unrelated to the subject-matter of the programs.

Effectiveness of the Leadership According to Program

Program	*No.*	*Excellent*	*Good*	*Fair*	*Poor*
World Affairs	38	15.8%	39.5%	26.3%	18.4%
Humanities	38	26.3	23.7	26.3	23.7
World Politics	37	48.6	27.1	24.3	0.0
Ways of Mankind	37	10.8	59.5	18.9	10.8

The leadership in the World Politics programs received the most favorable ratings. Almost half were rated excellent and none were rated poor. This was probably due to two factors. First is the fact that the World Politics programs have two leaders. These are equal co-leaders who supplement one another and tend to make up for each other's weaknesses, if any. Because they must decide in advance what their respective roles are to be at each meeting they tend to prepare more carefully. Furthermore, if the discussion tends to become irrelevant or get out of hand under one leader the other can intervene and get the discussion back on the track. The second factor is the materials themselves. The World Politics materials are meaty and present clearly opposing positions. This makes the job of leadership much easier. In the other programs the issues are not so clearly posed — and in some, the Humanities program particularly, the materials are more expository and only infrequently do they present opposing points of view and debatable issues.

The materials will be discussed in greater detail later. But there would appear to be little question that the marked differences in attitude toward the leadership in the different programs were due in part, at least, to the nature of the programs themselves.

In answer to the question, "What was good about the leadership?", the respondents answered as follows:

Leader focused on relevant issues, he kept the discussion on the track	24.0%
Leader involved members of the group, secured broad participation	23.3
Leader did not dominate the discussion or assume too much control	14.0
Leader was stimulating and provoked thought	15.4
No comment	23.3

While good leadership was viewed by most as consisting of focussing on the relevant issues, securing broad participation and not dominating the discussion too much, the highest praise was reserved for those leaders who were stimulating and had good backgrounds themselves in the subject matter. One participant commented, "The leader was excellent. He has an active and full mind with knowledge of many areas of information and learning." Another remarked, "He has a good general background himself. He knew just the right questions to ask to make us see the issues more clearly and frequently could contribute pertinent information and examples that weren't in the text. He stimulated us to want to read and learn more."

Eighty-five of the 150 participants interviewed offered comments on what they thought was poor about the leadership.

Criticism of the Leadership

Leader permitted irrelevant discussion, did not direct the discussion adequately or focus on the major issues	35.3%
Leader did not know enough about the subject matter	15.4
Leader not stimulating, didn't ask thought-provoking questions	12.0
Leader too controlling — talked too much	4.7
No comment	43.3

The basic criticism of the leadership was that it was not strong enough. Actually, the first three items of criticism listed above are interrelated, the differences are matters of emphasis. For example, in many instances the reason the leader was not stimulating and didn't ask provocative questions was because he was not himself sufficiently well-informed on the subjects under discussion. Similarly, inability of the leader to focus on major issues was frequently the result of inadequate knowledge of the subject. But even among the better-informed leaders there was an evident reluctance to play an affirmative leadership role. This was clearly a consequence of the instructions they had received in the leadership training.

It will be recalled that the leaders were usually selected not because of any special knowledge of the subject matter but because it was thought they were intelligent and articulate and could master discussion techniques. The assumption in the whole discussion program is that the knowledge and authority rests in the materials. Under the circumstances it is natural that those doing the training emphasize that the leaders are to be careful not to intrude their own views, that they are not to control the discussion too much and that their role is primarily to secure broad participation in the discussion. But this assumes that, on the basis of the materials alone, the members of the group are of sufficient caliber and sufficiently informed to identify the basic issues, see their implications and relate them to other relevant problems. But this was often not the case, as was reflected in the dissatisfaction with the adequacy of the participants expressed by almost a third of the members as well as noted by observation of the meetings themselves.

The fact that only 4.7 per cent of the participants thought that the leader was too controlling or talked too much is an indication of how strongly the leaders were impressed with the injunction not to be controlling. It was apparent that many of the leaders leaned over backwards and tended too far in the other direction. On the other hand, in many cases, it was probably just as well, because they were simply not competent to play a stronger role. But it raises serious questions as to the type of leadership essential to the success of a discussion program.

Among the typical comments made which support the above were the following:

> "The crux of the problem is leadership. The leadership in this group was weak. Irrelevant points were pursued. On knotty issues it would have been helpful to have leadership better informed and authoritative."
>
> "The leader had difficulty in expressing himself. He is not a vigorous or strong discussion chairman and would not intrude himself when he should. He didn't have a facility for synthesizing or summarizing."
>
> "The leader was good in her own background of art but was not good at other times."
>
> "The group needed an authority."

More than a dozen participants took the position that there was little leadership provided, that

> "There was really no leadership. The leader took the attitude that she was there just to play records."

or:

> "The leader was too restricted; he couldn't contribute his opinions."

and:

> "No one was sure what the leadership was supposed to be. Everyone wished the leader would have participated more."

Even where it was thought that the leader had a good background in the subject matter, the feeling was strong that he did not play a sufficiently positive role.

> "The leader was well-informed but too shy. The leadership was much too laissez-faire."

Among those who felt the leader was too controlling comments such as these were made:

> "He squelched people whom he didn't like or didn't agree with."

or

> "He rode hobby-horses and pushed his own point of view."

But, as indicated above, the percentage who felt the leadership was too controlling was very small. The most widespread criticism was that the leadership was not strong enough, in effect, that it was not sufficiently directive.

Many of the groups in Whittier and Pasadena and a few in Los Angeles used a system of rotating leaders. While one person, a coordinator, was responsible for the group, different participants took turns as discussion leader. Forty-five of the participants interviewed were in groups which had rotating leaders. While 19 thought it worked well (three saying it was excellent), the remainder thought the rotating leadership was only fair (13) or poor (13). There was generally less dissatisfaction with the system of rotating leadership in Whittier than in the other two areas. This may be due to the fact that it was more widely used in the Whittier area than in the others and hence more carefully planned both in terms of gaining acceptance of the idea by the participants in advance and in better training of the coordinators for guidance of the rotating leaders. Among Whittier participants, to a greater degree than among those in the other two areas, there was the impression that the purpose of the discussion groups was not only to discuss the issues in the particular subject-matter area, but to learn discussion techniques and leadership. Whether both objectives can be successfully achieved in a ten-meeting program is moot.

Additional light on how the participants regarded the leadership of the discussion groups is gained from their replies to the question, "How could the leadership be improved?" Whereas 85 interviewees commented on what they thought was poor about the leadership, 116 made suggestions as to how they thought the leadership could be improved. Thirty-four (22.7 per cent) had no suggestions to offer.

How Could the Leadership be Improved?*

By having competent, well-trained leaders who would give more direction to the discussions	41.3%
By having leaders with good subject-matter backgrounds	28.7
By having expert resource people on particular topics	3.3
By having one leader for all the meetings	6.0
Other	6.0
Had no suggestions	22.7

*15 participants made more than one suggestion.

Again a sizable minority, over two-fifths, recommended stronger leadership. The general feeling in this group was that the discussions were not given sufficient direction, that they didn't progress, and that too much time was spent on irrelevancies. They felt that the leaders should exert more control and participate more in the discussions themselves. Typical comments were:

> "The leader could exercise more control. Our leader sat back too much."
>
> "The leader could have been more directive. I wished he had given more of himself. He had a great deal to give."

More than a quarter of the participants felt that it was important to get leaders with good backgrounds in the subject matter under discussion. Typical of these was the member who commented,

> "In a number of areas the group, including the leader, didn't have enough knowledge for fruitful discussion. The materials in the course (Ways of Mankind) were not adequate to permit that or to substitute for a specialist. A leader with more background in this field could fill in many important gaps."

The 6.0 per cent (9 participants) who recommended one leader as against rotating leadership constituted one-fifth of those who were in groups which had rotating leadership.

Under the category "Other" were such recommendations as:

> "Older people should be selected as leaders. Our leader was too young and inexperienced."
>
> "The leaders should encourage members to look up additional material in advance."
>
> "Large groups should have at least two leaders."

The two major recommendations for the improvement of leadership, then, were that more competent (directive) and better informed leaders be secured or trained. As previously indicated, the two suggestions are of course related, but unquestionably part of the reason for the tendency to "underlead" was due to the instructions given in the training.

As between the recommendations of college graduates and non-college graduates for the improvement of the leadership, the greatest difference was in regard to securing leaders with good subject-matter backgrounds. Thirty-six per cent of the non-college graduates made this recommendation as compared with 23.6 per cent of the college graduates. There was a greater tendency on the part of non-college graduates to expect information from the leader. As remarked previously, this may account for the generally lower rating accorded the leadership by the non-college graduates than the college graduates.

A majority (62.6 per cent) felt that most of the important differences in viewpoint were usually developed in the discussions. This assumes that the interviewees were always aware of the different possible points of view on the issues under discussion. But, of course, such was not always the case. Not only were the participants not always aware of alternative or opposing viewpoints, but in the course of the observation of meetings, it was apparent that the leaders failed on occasion to raise issues or cite views which were most appropriate and pertinent and without which a complete examination of the problem or idea under discussion was not possible. Sometimes this was due to lack of knowledge but the time factor was also frequently the cause of inadequate exploration. This was particularly true in those sessions which attempted to cover too much in a single evening. It was notably true of the World Affairs sessions.

A sizable proportion of those interviewed, one-third, felt that the major differing points of view were not brought out in the discussions. A quarter of these thought it was because there was too much ground to cover in so limited a time. All of those so reporting were in World Affairs or Humanities groups. Approximately another quarter felt that the group was not sufficiently well informed to bring out the different points of view. Commented one interviewee in this group:

> "No, I felt this was one of the weaknesses. The members of my group really didn't know enough to bring out all sides of a question. A resource person would have been helpful in bringing them out."

Nine cases reported that the people in their groups were too much alike in their views, so that opposing views were not likely to be presented. One reported:

> "No, the group was too much alike. They were all liberal. A person would be afraid to express an illiberal point of view."

And another stated:

> "People were so much alike. We agreed on everything too easily and too much. The conservative viewpoint usually was not brought out."

Eight persons thought that the materials were largely at fault because they did not provide different points of view. The materials referred to were those in World Affairs and Ways of Mankind.

The remaining eight of the 50 who did not think the major different points of view were brought out in the discussions made a variety of comments. Two felt that the effects of McCarthyism were still strong and were sure that some of the participants didn't feel they could express their views freely. Two felt their groups were too small to get a broad range of opinion. And one expressed very strong feelings that his own point of view never received an adequate hearing: "No, I don't think the different points of view were all brought out. I don't think they knew how I felt. I really don't think they did." And when asked why he didn't voice his views, he answered, "I felt the others were better informed than I. I didn't agree but about all I could do was argue emotionally. I wasn't sufficiently well-informed and didn't have a good enough academic background to answer them."

In a program whose primary objective is to secure a broad exchange of views and the exploration of different viewpoints, the fact that a third of the participants interviewed did not believe that the major differing viewpoints were brought out in the discussion constitutes a serious criticism.

One cannot assume in a discussion program that the members of the group will always develop or voice the basic differences in viewpoint on a given issue. The participants may not know the different viewpoints or, as frequently occurs, the members may share common attitudes and views. So that even when opposing views are described they are not presented with the same conviction and documentation; clearly, if opposing viewpoints are to be fairly presented for discussion they are best presented by their strong adherents. It is for this reason that the World Politics materials are more successful than the others for discussion purposes, because this is precisely what they provide. The others, on the whole, do not.

If the discussion leaders are not selected for their knowledge of the subject matter, it is all the more important that the materials provide clear-cut, stimulating statements of the major points of view. But in view of the limited number of hours available in each discussion program, even the most carefully planned materials will not include material on all the possible issues that may arise in the discussions. Furthermore, in view of the fact that much time in the discussions is frequently spent on irrelevant tangents, it would appear increasingly important that the discussion leaders be, if not experts on the subject matter, at least extremely well informed. It is likely that only through improved materials and more knowledgeable leaders, barring the use of experts, can consideration of the major differing points of view be ensured.

The Materials

The materials used in the four programs vary in format and conception. In two of the programs the materials were developed specifically for discussion purposes; in the others they were existing materials adapted for use in the discussion groups.

In the "World Affairs Are Your Affairs" program, the materials comprise a discussion manual, ten Foreign Policy Association Headline Series pamphlets, and a series of documentary films. The discussion manual describes the objectives of the program and includes: instructions as to how good discussion is achieved, a brief introduction to each evening's discussion, and suggested problems for discussion. A Headline Series pamphlet is the basis for discussion at each of the ten evenings in the program. The subjects of the ten pamphlets are: The United States and World Trade, India, Japan, China, Egypt, Africa, Germany, France, Latin America, and America's Foreign Policy. These pamphlets are regular F.P.A. pamphlets and were not designed especially for discussion purposes.

The materials in "An Introduction to the Humanities" program include a Participant's Manual, a Book of Readings, pictures, slides and recordings. The Manual is more comprehensive than the discussion guide in the World Affairs program. Prepared for the discussion program by the Humanities Staff of the College of the University of Chicago, it discusses at some length each topic for the eleven meetings of the program. The topics are: The Humanities and the Sciences; The Media of Creative Expression; The Major Literary Genres; Literature: The Narrative Forms of Poetry; Literature: Lyric Forms; The Visual Arts: Painting; The Visual Arts: Architecture; Music: Rhythm and Melody; Music: Harmony and Form; Music: The Structure of Large Forms; and The Role of Convention in the Arts.

The Book of Readings in the Humanities program includes the Story of the Crucifixion from *The Gospel According to St. John,* Plato's *The Apology,* Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* selected poems, and musical notations.

The World Politics materials consist of two volumes of selected readings edited and published by the American Foundation for Political Education, a Discussion Leader's Manual, and Session Guides for the participants. The topics for the ten meetings of the program are: Introductory Discussion (The Atlantic Charter and the Joint Declaration of Basic Principles, a joint statement issued by Eisenhower and Churchill), What Causes War?, State and Individual, Democracy, Communism, Domination, Self-Determination, Power Politics and Ideology, International Organization and World Government, and Means and Ends in World Politics. The readings on each topic represent a wide range of viewpoints and whenever possible, diametrically opposed views. Among the authors included in the readings are: Woodrow Wilson, Karl Marx, Eisenhower, Lenin, Renan, Freud, de Tocqueville, Mussolini, John Stuart Mill, Lincoln, and Khrushchev. The Discussion Leader's Manual provides instructions and guidelines on how to achieve good discussion. The Session Guides provide an introductory or explanatory statement on each topic, pertinent quotations and suggested questions for discussion.

The Ways of Mankind program deals at each successive session with: Culture, Language, Technology, Education, Values, Groups, Family, Ethics, Authority, Status and Role, Arts and Religion. For each topic a recording is provided of a dramatized story or incident illustrating the topic in the lives of a people or culture different from our own. The scripts are based upon the ideas of anthropologists. The volume provided each participant contains an introduction to each topic and the actual script of the recording. The recording for the evening is played at the session and the members of the group usually follow the script in their books while the record is being played.

A Discussion Leader's Guide is also available to the leaders in the Ways of Mankind program. The Guide provides the leader with some brief explanatory notes on each recording, suggested issues to be developed and discussed and some short supplementary readings.

In answer to the question, "Did you find the materials 'very interesting, 'interesting,' or 'dull,' " the replies were as follows:

Very interesting	46.0%
Interesting	48.7
Dull	5.3

This would indicate very little dissatisfaction with the materials in contrast to the 21.0 per cent who had indicated that it was the materials that they liked least in the discussion program. But as suggested there, and as we shall see, it was particular aspects of the materials which were disliked and not the materials *in toto.*

In their general reactions to the materials there was considerable difference among the participants in the different subject-matter programs.

Program	*Number*	*Very Interesting*	*Interesting*	*Dull*
World Affairs	38	47.3%	44.7%	7.9%
Humanities	38	13.2	78.9	7.9
World Politics	37	72.9	24.3	2.7
Ways of Mankind	37	51.3	45.9	2.7

A substantial majority thought the World Politics materials were very interesting in contrast to the 13.2 per cent who found the Humanities materials very interesting. In general, there was more criticism of the Humanities and World Affairs materials than of the other two. Because the materials and audio-visual aids in the four programs were quite different, the participants' evaluation of each are presented separately.

Twenty-nine per cent of those in World Affairs groups found the readings stimulating. Eighteen per cent thought the films were good and 16 per cent liked the variety of viewpoints represented. Others commented on particular pamphlets which they had enjoyed.

The greatest criticism (71.1 per cent) was that the text materials were not up-to-date. Forty-seven per cent thought the films were poor. Some felt they were not especially relevant and did not help the discussion particularly; others that some of the films were biased and presented a particular point of view. A number felt that the mechanical difficulties in showing the films were more trouble than they were worth and simply took away valuable time from the discussion.

Twenty per cent thought the reading materials were somewhat academic and not sufficiently stimulating. They felt that for discussion purposes a greater variety of viewpoints in the texts would have provoked more stimulating discussion.

Eleven per cent thought that the materials attempted to cover too much. Commented one participant, "How can you expect to cover all of Africa or China in one session? It just makes the discussion superficial."

Only ten per cent of those in the Humanities discussion groups volunteered that they thought the materials in general were good. Almost half (47.4 per cent) thought the materials were too academic, poorly written, or not very stimulating. They were especially critical of the music section, most feeling that it was too technical and provided little basis for discussion. (On the other hand, in those groups where music authorities were brought in to handle the music section, the response was universally good and in some groups proved to be the highlight of the program. This would indicate that there was considerable interest in music but that the music section was too technical to be handled successfully without a music authority. It must also be added that where experts were brought in, although there were questions and some discussion, the sessions were primarily lectures and demonstrations.)

The literature, poetry, and art sections were generally well received, particularly the literature section, although about 20 per cent thought the selections in literature and poetry might have been better. The pictures and slides were especially well received, 30 per cent of the participants selecting them for particular approval. Reactions to the architecture section were mixed, about 15 per cent reporting that they thought it too technical.

The basic underlying criticism of the Humanities materials was that they were much too academic and abstract and were not developed so as to stimulate discussion. One participant suggested that statements by different writers and artists, representing opposing or different points of view as to the nature and meaning of their arts, would have been much more productive and meaningful and would have enabled the group to focus on more basic ideas and gain greater insights.

Almost everyone in the World Politics programs thought the materials were excellent. They liked the selections and especially the fact that opposing points of view were so ably presented. A small minority (8.1 per cent) thought the materials were too difficult and 13 per cent thought the reading assignments were too long.

Of the four programs, the World Politics materials received the highest degree of praise and approval.

There was fairly general approval of the Ways of Mankind material.

Forty-three per cent of the participants made especial mention of the records as being excellent or extremely good.

The most widespread criticism of the materials was that they did not provide enough background material. Thirty per cent of the participants in this program recommended that additional textual materials be provided.

Some 18.9 per cent also felt that the presentation of the materials could be improved to stimulate more discussion. About half of these suggested that they be more directly related to issues and problems in our own society.

Several participants questioned the value of having the identical materials in the text and on the records. Others, however, felt that going through the material again on the records was helpful and supplied a dramatic aspect that helped make the issues more vivid.

Three participants felt that there was considerable overlapping of ideas, and two felt that the materials were too elementary.

There was considerable variation in the amount of time spent by participants on the reading of materials before each meeting. The majority in the Ways of Mankind groups spent a half hour or less on the readings. At the other extreme, 73 per cent of World Politics participants spent more than an hour and a half on the readings (a third of the total, more than two hours). The average for the other two programs was an hour and a half.

The Ways of Mankind materials require very little time to read. As previously indicated, almost a third of the participants recommended that additional background material be provided in this program. There appears to be little doubt that good discussion hinged on some basic common knowledge of the information and issues under question. It is questionable how much information and clarification one can get in a half-hour's reading. While some complained that there was too much to read in the World Politics program, this program and its materials received the highest commendation of all from the participants. Part of it was due, undoubtedly, to the fact that the materials were meaty and full enough to provide a good basis for discussion.

Since this study was completed, additional background materials have been provided in the Ways of Mankind program in the Los Angeles area and have been received with great satisfaction. There is general agreement that the Ways of Mankind discussions have improved as a result of the added materials. There is a limit to how much busy adults can realistically be expected to read each week in preparation for the meetings. But, granting differences among them, probably a minimum of two hours of reading and preferably more, is necessary to gain some basic knowledge and appreciation of the issues for each meeting. There is no easy way to knowledge and intellectual growth. Participants in a discussion program must be impressed with the importance of doing all the reading indicated for each session and adequate materials must be made available. In this sample, 76 per cent reported that they usually did all the reading for each session.

Asked how the discussion groups differed from other classes or courses the participants had taken, the answers were as follows:

It was more informal – less academic	45.4%
More interchange of views – varied viewpoints	29.3
More variation in background of participants	14.0
Other	12.7
No answer	10.7

The most obvious differences in the eyes of most participants were that they were informal, did not have subject-matter teachers or lectures, and that the emphasis was on discussion and exchange of views. The fact that there was much greater variation in age and background was also remarked upon by 14 per cent of the participants. Other comments under "Other" were:

> "It was different in that people were there because they were interested. They didn't have to be there. It was looked upon as something pleasant to do."
>
> "The group was superior to any group I had ever been in." (Three others made this comment.)
>
> "In other groups, I was a listener. Here I talked. There was no real work connected with it."

Two participants remarked that the age level was higher than in any class they had ever been in.

In regard to the variety of backgrounds, an engineer remarked, "I liked the diversity of the group. Engineers get a distorted picture of the world because they have too similar a background. This group helped give me better balance and perspective."

Underlying most of the comments was the feeling that the discussion group was quite a different experience from the typical educational experiences they had had. It made less formal demands upon them and on the whole it was a more pleasurable experience because of the absence of pressures.

As to whether it was a more or less valuable experience than other classes or courses taken, there was considerable difference of opinion, as the following shows:

About the same	2.0%
Neither, they are different	34.0
More valuable	44.0
Less valuable	20.0

About a third of the participants interviewed (34 per cent) felt that one couldn't compare the discussion groups with the typical course or class because they were different in objectives and method. By and large this group perceived the discussion program as primarily providing an opportunity for exchange of views. They viewed the typical class as transmitting information and felt the two were different. Other participants felt the experience was more or less valuable depending upon what they were looking for.

In the group which felt that the experiences were not comparable, the following comments were typical:

> "It's pretty impossible to say (which was more valuable). It depends on the subject material and what you want to get out of it. You can't say one is better than the other. For its purpose the discussion is a lot better than the school-type method. But the purposes are different."
>
> "In the discussion you get less in learning but more in the exchange of ideas. It makes you think more and compels you to clarify your thinking."
>
> "I had more fun in it. I really enjoyed the meetings but I'm not sure it was more valuable. It was just different."

Forty-four per cent found the experience more valuable because they thought it was more stimulating than the traditional class and attributed this to the discussion and exchange of views. A number, however, were careful to point out that it was more valuable to them now, after having had considerable formal education. These, too, really thought it was a different kind of educational experience. For example, one participant said, "At this time of life the discussion group was more valuable to me. I wouldn't be interested in going back to a traditional class. But you've got to have both."

Almost all who said it was more valuable stressed the stimulus of the exchange of views:

> "It was primarily the exchange of opinions and discussions which made it more valuable for me. I object to a lot of nonessential material in regular classes. I found this lots more stimulating."

But a few felt they gained more knowledge, too. One woman replied,

> "It was far more valuable than anything I have ever done before, including college. Such a variety of knowledge acquired painlessly!"

A number of others found it more valuable because it helped them build their self-confidence:

> "It seems more valuable to me because it was more stimulating. It sort of rebuilt my confidence and made me more secure in my opinions. I was able to test them."

And another,

> "It was more valuable for me because I learned to speak up. Previously I've been reluctant even to ask questions in class. I think I learn more in a discussion."

Finally, several thought it was more valuable but expressed some reservations, for example:

> "It was more valuable except that the people in the group were limited. It could have been more valuable. Aside from the leader and the materials, the caliber of the group is very important."

Approximately three-quarters of the 20 per cent reporting the discussion groups were *less* valuable to them than other classes or courses thought so because they felt they didn't learn enough. Typical of their replies were these:

> "Given the same amount of time I could have gotten more from my own reading."

or,

> "It was enjoyable but too easy. I didn't learn much. It was less valuable than the traditional class. There was not enough mental discipline and it fell short in the amount of background reading required."

The remaining quarter thought it was less valuable because they were critical of some aspects of the discussion, or because the objectives were not very clear. For example:

> "The discussions always got off on tangents. The real points were frequently missed. The discussions were never summarized and the issues weren't clarified."

and,

> "Other classes have clearer educational aims. I was never sure what we were trying to do."

Gain in Knowledge About the Matters Under Discussion

	Total	*Non-Degree*	*Degree*
No. of Cases	150	61	89
A great deal	28.0%	29.5%	27.0%
Some	63.3	67.2	60.7
Very little	7.4	3.3	10.1
None	1.3	0.0	2.2

Interviewees were asked to answer in terms of one of the four categories above. Admittedly they are not very clear-cut categories. How much is "some" or how little is "very little"? But what one can get from the replies is an indication of participant feeling as to whether they gained any substantive knowledge from the programs. For the most part they evidently thought they did and over a quarter of them felt they had learned a great deal. But again there was considerable latitude as to what the word "knowledge" meant. One woman, for example, answered:

> "I learned a great deal. I don't know how much; it helped me greatly to evaluate and to read with understanding. It has greatly expanded my mental horizons. I'm determined to expand them more in the future. I must say, however, that I would have liked more expert information."

It was also apparent that even some of those who were quite critical of the program or of certain aspects of it felt they had gained more knowledge from the experience. For example, the man who had indicated that he would have gotten more in the same amount of time by reading on his own, said he had gained a great deal.

The answers according to education indicate that a somewhat greater percentage of non-college graduates than graduates felt that they had gained a "great deal" or "some" more knowledge about the matters under discussion.

As for differences by subject program, a greater percentage of participants in the World Politics groups (40.5 per cent) replied "a great deal" than in any of the other programs. The Humanities had the lowest percentage in this category — 18 per cent. There were no cases among World Politics participants reporting "very little" or "none," in contrast to the 13.2 per cent and 2.6 per cent in those categories among Humanities participants.

Subject-Matter Specialist

In asking the participants whether or not they had gained more knowledge about the matters under discussion, they were also sounded out as to whether they felt the absence of a subject-matter specialist as discussion leader, or resource person, and whether they favored having subject-matter specialists. The results were as follows:

Favored subject-matter specialist as leader	38.7%
Favored subject-matter specialist as resource person	20.6
Opposed to having a subject-matter specialist	30.0
No answer	10.7

A majority favored having a subject-matter specialist either as leader or resource person. Those who favored a subject-matter specialist as leader felt the discussions would be much better, not only in terms of getting more information, but also in terms of focusing the discussion on the vital issues. Said one participant:

> "We definitely needed a specialist. There was too much wandering around in a maze. It was too superficial even when there was good participation. You've got to start with concrete knowledge and then discuss."

Another stated:

> "The leader knew most about art. This helped make the art discussion most profitable. In the other parts he was not so well informed and the discussion was not nearly as good."

Seven persons reported that they had gotten a great deal out of the music sessions in the Humanities program because music authorities had been brought in for that section.

Those who favored having a subject-matter specialist as a resource person felt it was necessary so that more adequate information would be available, but were opposed to having the specialist as a leader lest he dominate the discussion and convert it into a lecture program.

The 30 per cent opposed to having subject-matter specialists at the meetings felt even more strongly on this point. With the exception of a few who felt that it might be desirable to bring in a resource person on special occasions when the material was too technical (*e.g.*, the music section in the Humanities), they were generally convinced that the presence of a subject-matter specialist would either inhibit discussion or tend to domination of the discussion by the specialist. Several World Affairs participants remarked that when they had occasionally invited, as resource persons, natives of the countries under discussion or persons who had spent considerable time in those countries, sessions turned into lectures and they felt the major purpose of the program was defeated. Illustrative of the thinking of those opposed to having specialists in the discussion groups are the following comments:

> "Our group was pretty well agreed that we wouldn't benefit from an expert. With an expert, the lines go out from him to each member of the group rather than from each member to each other."

or,

> "A specialist would have been too academic. We would have been too timid if there had been a specialist and we would not have talked so much. This happened when specialists came in."

and,

> "The discussion was much more valuable than having an authority lecture. I learned to formulate my ideas coherently. It was much the same as being in a graduate seminar."

Finally, there were three participants who reported that they did not feel the absence of a specialist because the leader was so well rounded and well informed, and, as one said, "always supplied the missing links." The differences in attitude between non-college graduates and college graduates toward the use of specialists in the discussion programs was marked:

	Non-Degree	*Degree*
Favored subject-matter specialist as leader	52.5%	29.2%
Favored subject-matter specialist as resource person	23.0	19.2
Opposed to having subject-matter specialist	14.7	40.4
No answer	9.8	11.2

Whereas more than half the non-college graduates favored a subject-matter specialist as a leader, less than a third of the college graduates shared this feeling. In regard to subject-matter specialists as resource persons, the difference between the two groups was not so great. While differences between men and women with regard to the use of subject-matter specialists were sizable, they were not as great as between college graduates and non-graduates.

	Male	*Female*
Favored subject-matter specialist as leader	32.2%	42.5%
Favored subject-matter specialist as resource person	14.3	24.5
Opposed to having subject-matter specialist as leader	39.2	24.5
No answer	14.3	8.5

Two-thirds of the women favored a subject-matter specialist as leader or resource person as compared with 47 per cent of the men. Among non-college graduates, 76 per cent favored a specialist as leader or resource person. It will be remembered that the percentage of college graduates was greater among the men than among the women. A comparable pattern in the two breakdowns was therefore to be expected. But it is apparent that the educational factor was somewhat more significant than the difference in sex.

One of the things that became apparent in the discussions with the participants about the question of subject-matter specialists was the fact that many, particularly those with more education, had been sold on the idea that this program was to be a new and different kind of experience. The discussion aspect provided its uniqueness. The notion of the lay leader was presented as a sort of guarantee that discussion would prevail and that there would be no lectures. Actually the utilization of lay leadership in the program is a necessity if costs are to be kept down and if it is to become a widespread program. In a very large program it would be difficult to get enough specialists and they would have to be paid far more. Here, what was an administrative necessity was emphasized as a virtue and an end in itself.* The college graduates, therefore, who were not too interested in further formal education, and were primarily interested in the discussion aspects, tended to buy this concept of the lay leader as ensuring discussion as against lectures. Objectively, however, there is nothing to preclude persons of good subject-matter background from being good discussion leaders and probably better discussion leaders than those with little or no background.

---

*In mitigation, one must mention that in addition to stimulating discussion of important issues and ideas, one of the objectives of the F.A.E. program is to develop skills in discussion leadership among lay persons. But whether this can be done, while at the same time meeting the legitimate needs of the majority of the participants who come for other purposes, is still under question.

Those with less education were less sold on the notion because they felt less secure in the subject fields and wanted more information and direction. This was evident in that non-college graduates and women tended to participate less in the discussions. Eighty per cent of the college graduates, as compared with 59 per cent of the non-college graduates, stated that they participated as much as or more than the other participants. Similarly, 83 per cent of the men, in contrast to 61 per cent of the women, reported they participated as much as or more than the others. The majority of participants felt that either a few dominated the discussion, or up to half of the members in a group participated while the others spoke but infrequently.

From the supplementary comments it was clear that most of the interviewees believed that a good discussion group was one in which everyone participated about equally, the more members participating, the better. Non-participants in the discussions were viewed as probably not benefitting much. The notion that one might gain a great deal merely by listening and that attentive listening might be active participation, was alien. A good part of this feeling was unquestionably due to the initial indoctrination of the members and to the leadership training. Many of the leaders felt that one of their primary tasks, if not the primary one, was to get participation and as broad participation as possible, at any cost.

A number of those who answered "Yes" went on to point out that those who talked most also had more to contribute.

> "Oh, yes! It was very noticeable. Although most of the time they were saying things that were very valuable."

and,

> "One person did talk a lot more than the others, but he knew more and had more to contribute."

Several others indicated that the reason that a few did most of the talking was because the rest of the group would not talk.

> "A few dominated because so many wouldn't talk at all."

or,

> "Many group members were reserved, so when lulls came up, one of the more articulate ones would speak. As a result about a third of the members talked all the time."

Seven participants mentioned the fact that the discussion was maintained by the men in the group and that women spoke little if at all.

Approximately 60 per cent reported that there was broader participation at the later meetings than at the outset.

Change in Views

In response to the question, "Were there any indications that the other members of your group changed their views as a result of the discussions?", almost half (47.3 per cent) answered "No." Twenty-three per cent answered "Yes" and 12 per cent replied "Some or a few." Seventeen per cent answered that it was "Difficult to tell."

Some of their comments were:

> "Yes, on such subjects as UNESCO and the U.N. some participants became more tolerant."
>
> "Yes, many became more aware of the interdependence of all countries."
>
> "I think so. The middle still stayed the middle but the ends came in some. One of the most rabid on the left saw some of the contradictions in his position. He had to re-examine his views."
>
> "Yes, I had the feeling a few people changed their views. They began to understand what Point Four and economic aid meant. A few woke up to the damage McCarthy had done to the United States Information Service."

Those who answered in the negative made such comments as:

> "No, we each stuck stoutly to what we came in with all along the line."

or,

> "No, I don't think so. Maybe because the group was so similar."

Among those who answered it was "difficult to say," fully half thought the participants' views were influenced but perhaps not changed. Typical of their comments:

> "It was more that they developed views. This program (Ways of Mankind) didn't have many controversial points, like political issues. It's hard to say."
>
> "It enlarged their views more than changed them. It surely stimulated some to read more."
>
> "They didn't change their opinions but modified them. The discussion had a mellowing influence."

It was difficult, of course, for interviewees to know to what extent other members of the group had changed their views. No doubt they were more aware of the dramatic changes they may have observed, and there were probably not too many of these. Again, they may have been influenced to some degree by whether or not they themselves had experienced any change in viewpoint. This would appear to be evident from the answers to the next question, "What ideas, if any, did you change as a result of the discussions?"

The replies were:

Developed new concepts or attitudes	17.3%
Specific views based on information gained in the discussions	15.3
Became more objective – aware that there was more than one solution or answer to problems	10.7
Other	10.7
None	46.0

Significantly, the percentage answering "None" to this question is almost identical with the percentage answering "No" to the question of whether there were indications that other members had changed their views.

More than half the interviewees indicated that they had changed some of their ideas or attitudes. Some of the answers were general and related to growth in objectivity and open-mindedness. Changes in concepts and attitudes included conceptions of authority, family relationships, the interdependence of nations, the role of economic forces in world affairs, modern painting, modern art, and the like. One woman who had been in a Ways of Mankind group reported:

> "I changed my conception of authority and domination. I became more democratic. I should say I did."

A World Politics participant answered:

> "I realized more than ever before that many of the problems or issues had no absolute or definitive answers. This was driven home to me tremendously."

Nine participants in the Humanities program stated that they learned to like modern art for the first time. They made such comments as:

> "I think I could look at extremely abstract art now and enjoy it."

or,

> "I detested and then came to love Picasso's *Three Musicians.* It has helped me to like modern painting. Now, without being more specific, I'm sure I've altered in other ways as well."

Approximately half of those in the category "Other" stated that they had changed some of their ideas or views but couldn't recall at the moment what they were. The remainder said that they were compelled to re-evaluate their ideas as a result of the discussions.

Replies to the question, "Do you think most of the members tended to become more open-minded?" are tabulated below. By "open-minded," it was explained to the interviewees, was meant a willingness to listen to views opposed to one's own and a willingness to re-examine one's own position. Somewhat over half (55 per cent) of those interviewed thought that most of the participants tended to become more open-minded, and another 11 per cent that at least some did.

		Replies by Program			
Answers	*Total*	*World Affairs*	*Humanities*	*World Politics*	*Ways of Mankind*
Total No. of Cases	150	38	38	37	37
Yes	54.7%	47.3%	50.0%	70.2%	51.4%
Some	10.7	10.6	5.3	13.6	13.5
Most were open-minded to begin with	12.7	18.4	15.8	5.4	10.8
Difficult to say	8.6	13.1	10.5	2.7	8.1
No	13.3	10.6	18.4	8.1	16.2

Examining the replies by program, we find that a considerably larger percentage of those in the World Politics groups than in the others felt that members tended to become more open-minded. The differences between the others were not so great, but the Humanities participants had the smallest percentage in the combined "Yes" and "Some" categories. Again, one must point out that the subject matter and nature of the materials probably had a good deal to do with the responses. In those programs where opposing views were more clearly stated or indicated there was greater opportunity for participants to develop habits of listening to different viewpoints, and for re-examination of viewpoints. At the same time, in such programs the reactions and attitudes of the members with respect to open-mindedness would be more evident. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the percentage of affirmative replies was so much greater among those in the World Politics programs than in the Humanities programs.

Many of those answering "Yes" cited examples of increased open-mindedness as a result of the discussions. Some were very emphatic in their answers. One prominent attorney replied:

> "Yes! No question about it. It is one of the most important aspects of this kind of program. For example, before the discussion most of the people in the group regarded France as a decadent country. Subsequently they began to look at the problems from the French point of view and France became a subject of some admiration rather than pity and censure. This carried over into discussions of other countries. More and more, we began to examine international problems from a broader point of view, taking into consideration the views of other countries as well as our own."

A housewife and former schoolteacher said:

> "Yes, definitely. At first there was the feeling by many in the group that any notion that we should recognize Red China, or have any feeling of community with Communist nations was bad. As we went along, there was increasing recognition that such views should at least be given a hearing and should not be pre-judged emotionally."

Among those answering "No," about a third indicated that one couldn't expect people to become more open-minded in a few meetings. Several felt that the lack of "real discussion" precluded the development of more open-mindedness. Approximately half of those in the "Difficult to say" category stated that there was so little that was controversial in the materials, it was hard to tell whether members became more open-minded. These were largely in the Ways of Mankind and Humanities groups.

Approximately half the interviewees, almost as many as thought that "most of the members tended to become more open-minded," thought that they themselves tended to become more open-minded as a result of the discussions. As perhaps might have been expected, many more (28.0%) thought they were open-minded to begin with, than had replied that the other members were open-minded to begin with. More men than women by almost ten per cent thought they tended to become more open-minded, whereas more women than men stated they were open-minded to begin with.

Typical of the comments by those replying "Yes" were the following:

A woman in sales promotion:

> "I'm more tolerant of conservative views. I never had been before. I liked and admired the people voicing them, so I had to give them a fair hearing."

Aircraft company production supervisor:

> "Absolutely! This was one thing it did for me. Before attending these meetings I had very definite ideas. Now, I'm not so sure. I've got to think them through again."

Attorney:

> Reported that he didn't think most upper-middle-class people needed the discussion program to become more open-minded but that he did and felt that the World Politics discussions made him more open-minded.

Woman attorney:

> "I'm not sure I had very fixed views. I never thought about such problems till after the war. I don't think my views changed fundamentally during the discussion program. I ended up with a lot of question marks but with a far better conception of the value of different views. For example, I would not now accept the view that those who are in favor of relinquishing some national sovereignty are subversive, whereas before joining the group I might have. Now I'd be willing to entertain the idea of relinquishing some sovereignty in the interest of world peace."

An engineer:

> "I was somewhat humbled by the experience. I'm much less sure that I have all the answers. The great variety of viewpoints was particularly

impressive, many very convincingly presented. They couldn't be shrugged off. As you considered them you found some logic or merit in positions which you would have dismissed before without a thought. I'm not so sure that my views changed very fundamentally, but I'm sure more receptive to new or different ideas. At least I'll give them an honest hearing."

As for those answering "No," the great majority seemed to feel they were "open-minded" to begin with but did not say so explicitly. Others indicated that one couldn't expect any great changes in so short a time.

Change in Reading Habits

		Education		Program			
Replies	*Total*	*Non-Degree*	*Degree*	*World Affairs*	*Humanities*	*World Politics*	*Ways of Mankind*
No. of Cases	150	60	89	38	38	37	37
Yes	42.7%	52.4%	36.0%	42.1%	31.6%	54.1%	43.3%
No	57.3	47.6	64.0	57.9	68.4	45.9	56.7

More than 40 per cent of the participants reported a change in their reading habits as a result of their experience in the discussion groups. This is a highly significant percentage, indeed, considering the level of education of participants and the fact that as a group they already tended to read considerably more, and higher-quality reading matter, than the average citizen.

Of those reporting a change, 40.6 per cent stated they were now reading more and 70.3 per cent that they were reading more serious materials and in different fields than they had previously. As for those reporting no change in their reading habits, 19 per cent reported that they had always read a great deal.

In terms of educational background, the discussion programs apparently had more effect on the non-college graduates than on the college graduates in changing their reading habits. More than 16 per cent of the former replied in the affirmative as compared with the latter. On the other hand, more than twice as many college graduates as against non-college graduates answered that they had always read a great deal. But the fact that more than a third of the college graduates replied in the affirmative is not without significance. And the fact that more than half the non-college graduates reported that there had been a change in their reading habits is significant indeed.

Again the greatest percentage of participants reporting a change was in the World Politics groups and the smallest percentage was to be found in the participants who had been in Humanities discussion groups, although even in the latter almost a third reported a change in their reading habits. Clearly, of the four groups, as we have noted previously, the World Politics discussion groups had the greatest impact.

Participants in the Ways of Mankind groups reporting in the affirmative stated they were now reading more in anthropology and sociology, fields in which they had previously read little if at all. They mentioned books by Margaret Mead, Melville Herskovitz, Clyde Kluckhorn, Ruth Benedict, Paul Radin, A. L. Kroeber, David Riesman and Wright Mills. One remarked:

> "I read much more serious things now. I've just finished *The Lonely Crowd*. I doubt whether I would have read it if I hadn't been in the group. I'm more interested in books of greater social content now and find I'm reading fewer novels and fiction."

In the Humanities group, of those who reported changing their reading habits almost half reported that they were reading books on art for the first time, particularly modern painting. Two indicated that they had read books on music, and several reported they had become interested in reading more of Conrad.

Participants with changed reading habits who had been in World Affairs or World Politics groups, generally reported that they were reading more in international affairs and politics, several remarking that they had developed an interest in biographies of great political figures. Typical of their comments are the following:

> "I read lots more political views now. I've subscribed to the Sunday *Manchester Guardian* and read the *Christian Science Monitor* now regularly."
>
> "Yes, I read newspapers and news magazines more critically now. I don't accept everything in print. I've begun to see contradictions and inconsistencies."
>
> "The discussion group woke me up to the fact that I had been neglecting reading of books and had been spending most of my time reading magazines and looking at T.V. I'm now limiting my time given to magazines and T.V. and am spending more time reading serious books and non-fiction."

For at least two-fifths of the participants, then, the discussion groups had obviously had the effect of improving their reading habits.

Social Effect of the Discussion Groups

Fifty per cent of the participants reported that they had formed friendships in the discussion groups. Upon probing, some of these admitted that they hadn't seen much of the new friends since the group meetings ended, but three-fifths of those stating that they had formed friendships reported that they visit with them currently. In addition to those reporting new friendships six per cent reported that, while they had known some of the members of the group previously, now they knew them much better and had become closer friends.

Nine of the 150 participants reported that they were fairly recent residents and that the discussion groups had been very important to them in becoming oriented and feeling at home in their new communities.

In at least two cases rather dramatic changes in friendship patterns resulted from having participated in the liberal arts discussion groups. One man and one woman reported that they had previously moved in social circles where the primary activities consisted of bridge playing, dinner parties where serious conversation never took place, dancing and visiting night clubs. They have now developed an almost entirely new set of friends whose interests are more intellectual and aesthetic. The woman commented:

> "I grew up in Los Angeles. Most of my friends were people I had grown up with. We would play bridge and have dinner at one another's homes but never talk about meaningful things. It was just light chit-chat. It wasn't considered polite to disagree with anyone too strongly and controversial issues were avoided. Most of them have rather limited interests. They don't read much and talked mostly about things about the home, the children, clothes and so on and the men talked about their business affairs. After being in the discussion group and meeting some very interesting people, my husband and I decided we didn't really have very much in common with most of the people we used to spend time with. We continued in another discussion group with most of the people who had been in the first group. We've made close friends among them and see them for the most part now. Our lives and values have really changed. We spend our spare time differently now. We discuss politics and international affairs, the latest books, and go to art exhibits. It's quite a change, believe me."

It may be concluded that almost a third of the participants developed new friendships as a result of their participation in the discussion groups and that these were based on common interest in the liberal arts. For some it meant relationships based on interests they hadn't previously shared with friends.

Freedom of Expression

The great majority felt that participants expressed their views freely. But approximately a quarter of the interviewees felt that they did not, or at least did not always express their views freely. In the latter group, most felt that the reasons lay in the climate and the nature of the subject matter or the group. Comments such as the following were made:

> "I think if there were any extreme views they would be more reticent because of the present climate."
>
> "Yes, except where religion was concerned."
>
> "No one is ever really free to speak. You're always a little careful to make what you say sound acceptable."
>
> "This group works at the same company. Due to differences in position I think some were probably inhibited."

But in a few instances it was apparent that the leadership discouraged the free expression of unpopular views. One participant reported that the leader

> "really intimidated some of the members of the group because he didn't agree with them. He always cut them off and changed the subject."

Another replied,

> "No, some were a bit constrained in certain fields, particularly communism. People got more constrained. They closed up. In fact, one couple dropped out completely. The wife's views were most unpopular. If she's not red, she's pink. She saw she couldn't get any converts there. We made it too hot for her."

The couple who dropped out were subsequently interviewed. They were intelligent, well-read people with strong liberal leanings. They reported that in discussing China they had taken the position that American policy with regard to China was untenable, that if the U.S. could recognize Spain, a dictatorship, it was illogical not to recognize Red China; that recognition did not imply approval of the country's form of government. Thereupon the owner of the home in which the group met told them that he did not care to have such views expressed in his home. They therefore decided to leave the group, inasmuch as they felt they were no longer welcome members.

While the last two instances were atypical, they highlight the importance of emphasizing, in the leadership training, the right of all members to express their views no matter how controversial or unpopular, so long as they are relevant to the issues under discussion. In the latter case, this was indisputably so — but the leader did not intervene to defend the couple's right to voice their views. It also indicates that where groups meet in homes the owners must be given to understand in advance that there are to be no limitations on free speech. If they have any reservations, obviously the group should not meet in their homes.

The more difficult censorship to cope with, however, is the self-censorship that people exert on themselves. This can probably best be met, over a period of time, by creating such an obviously free atmosphere for discussion in the groups that people will gradually feel more free to speak. In many groups just this happened. As time went on, people lost their inhibitions and fears. Several interviewees remarked that the groups were the first situations in many years in which they felt that discussion was free and unconstrained.

Meeting Place

Seventeen per cent of the interviewees were in groups which met in schools, 36 per cent in other public places, 33 per cent in private homes, and 14 per cent in churches.

Most of those reporting "school" met on the campus of the University. A few met at public adult schools or in private schools. Among the "public places" were the Liberal Arts Centers at Whittier and Pasadena, meeting halls, libraries, a bank and a stock brokerage office.

Seventy-eight per cent thought the meeting places were good; 15 per cent thought they were fair; and seven per cent thought they were poor. Most of the criticism was directed at some of the public places which were used. They were thought to be too small, or were criticized because of the uncomfortable chairs. Several felt private homes were not too desirable because of limited size, and two objected to the fact that their groups met at different homes and felt that it was a nuisance to go to a different place each week.

The significant fact, perhaps, is that a third of the participants met at private homes. This is a marked departure for adult classes or groups sponsored by public educational agencies. University Extension of the University of California had never previously administered programs in which private homes were used as meeting places.

Fifty-four per cent of the interviewees preferred private homes for discussion group meetings. Forty-three per cent preferred schools or public places, and three per cent reported no preference.

Those stating a preference for private homes as meeting places gave a variety of reasons for their preference. The most frequent were that homes were more informal and friendly; people established rapport more quickly and spoke more freely; and that it was interesting to see different peoples' homes. Many who had met in private homes mentioned the fact that refreshments were usually served and this created a friendly social atmosphere.

The reasons given by those who preferred public places to private homes as meeting places were: that homes were too small, especially those of people in low income groups; that in homes the meetings became too social and weren't serious enough (interestingly enough, no one who had met in a home gave this reason); and that people would feel inhibited and would not speak as freely in a private home.

It should be noted that when the discussion groups are publicized the brochures indicate where the groups meet and so the participants have a free choice in either going to a group meeting in a private home or in a public place. For practical purposes, being able to have groups meet in homes has been very helpful because of the difficulty frequently encountered in securing a good public meeting place. Most of the leaders and organizers also felt that the social aspects of the meetings in homes were very valuable and contributed considerably to the morale and spirit of the groups. Significantly, the number of interviewees who met in homes and reported having formed friendships in the discussion groups outnumbered those who met in public places by more than two to one.

Increased Participation in Community Affairs

It will be remembered that more than half the participants interviewed were already active in community affairs. Only seventeen, or 11 per cent, reported that they were more active since having been in a discussion group. And of the seventeen, only six indicated that the discussion group experience was responsible, in part at least, for their activity. It would appear, therefore, that a discussion group experience such as the Liberal Arts Adult Discussion Groups studied here, has no great effect in stimulating greater community activity, nor perhaps should it be expected. None of the four discussion programs under study dealt with local problems. In the World Politics and World Affairs programs, international and national problems were discussed. Few local organizations deal with these problems. Furthermore, the programs themselves stress understanding, not action. While one might assume that greater understanding would lead to action, it is not necessarily so. Presumably, the discussion experience develops better-informed citizens who might vote more intelligently but this, too, remains to be tested.

Further Participation in Discussion Groups

The one hundred past participants were asked whether they had participated in any other discussion groups or taken any courses since they were in the discussion group. Forty-one indicated they had participated in discussion groups since the one about which they were being interviewed. Thirty of these were in Liberal Arts or American Foundation for Political Education groups and eleven were in other groups, such as Great Books. The 30 per cent tends to be confirmed by the re-enrollment figures in Liberal Arts and World Politics groups, which range from 20 to 40 per cent.

Twenty-three reported that they had taken courses since having been in discussion groups, and of these, seven indicated that the interest in the subject developed by the discussion experience was what prompted them to take the courses. One participant stated that he would be everlastingly grateful for having been in the group because it stimulated him to quit his job and go back to school to finish his degree. He had left school three years previously.

There is ample evidence, then, that, aside from their effect on reading habits, the discussion groups stimulate a sizable fraction of the participants, probably a third, to continue their educational pursuits either through discussion groups or more formal classes.

Value and Significance of Discussion Group Experience

To secure the general reaction of participants to the program, they were asked two questions. The first, "If a friend were to ask whether he should enroll in one of the discussion groups, what would you tell him?", was asked half way through the interview. The second was asked at the end of the interview: "In general, how do you feel about these discussion groups, their value and importance?"

In answer to the first question, 77 per cent stated that they would advise their friend to enroll. Twenty per cent replied that it would depend on the person and his interests, and three per cent indicated that they would not advise a friend to enroll. The majority in the first category (more than 70 per cent) stated that they would *strongly* urge friends to enroll. Many said that they had, in fact, already advised friends to participate. (It will be recalled that 42 per cent of the participants reported that they had learned of the program from friends. The directors of the programs confirm that the programs have grown to a large extent because of the recommendations to friends by participants.) A large number elaborated on other replies, saying that they would advise their friends to enroll because the groups were educational and stimulating. A smaller number (approximately 11 per cent) stated that they would advise friends to enroll because in a democracy, discussion of public issues is essential. All of these were, naturally enough, participants in World Politics or World Affairs groups. Particularly interesting was the fact that a number who were not especially pleased with the group they were in, nevertheless indicated that they would urge friends to enroll but would advise them to go into particular subject groups and avoid others. The reservations were largely directed against the World Affairs and Humanities groups.

The three per cent who would not advise friends to enroll stated generally that the time wasn't well invested, that they could learn more reading on their own or attending a class.

The replies to the second question fell into three basic general categories as shown below:

In General, How Do You Feel About these Discussion Groups, Their Value and Importance?

		Sex		Education		Program			
Replies	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Non-Degree*	*Degree*	*World Affairs*	*Humanities*	*World Politics*	*Ways of Mankind*
No. of Cases	150	56	94	61	89	38	38	37	37
Extremely valuable & significant	72.4%	67.9%	73.4%	73.7%	69.7%	63.2%	52.6%	86.4%	83.7%
Valuable	23.3	25.0	22.3	23.0	23.6	28.9	42.1	8.2	13.6
Little value	5.3	7.1	4.3	3.3	6.7	7.9	5.3	5.4	2.7

A considerable majority (72.4 per cent) felt the discussion groups were extremely valuable and significant. Only 5.3 per cent felt that they did not have any great value. There was little difference between men and women or between non-college and college graduates. Again, the World Politics Program fared best, with 86.4 per cent thinking it was very valuable, whereas the Humanities program had the lowest percentage reporting that they thought it extremely valuable (52.6 per cent).

Many of the participants gave extensive answers. They pointed up the educational value of the programs, the importance of discussion for good citizenship, the enrichment it provided, and the desirability of such activities as compared with other leisure-time activities. Fourteen mentioned the fact that it provided a worth-while intellectual endeavor in which they could participate with their husbands or wives. Twelve remarked that it had altered the conversational patterns with their friends, that they now discussed more serious things. For reasons of space, only a small number of typical comments are quoted below:

> "The discussion group was very valuable. Everything possible should be done so that they can be continued. They bring a person out. Democracy depends on people listening freely to all points of view."
>
> "I'm very enthusiastic about them. Once you get out of school you lose touch with the important things. These help focus your attention on problems. One of the most important things was that we learned to listen to other people's opinions. It also stirred interest in others as well as myself to read more serious things."

> "I can't tell you how valuable it was! Up until six months ago I read the *Saturday Evening Post,* the *Ladies' Home Journal,* and that sort of thing. I'm more interested in current problems now. My tastes have changed. We even associate with different people now. We first joined for social reasons, but then we became really interested in the things we discussed. My husband and I began to read together. We both feel we have lots more in common now."
>
> "They're tremendously important. People are too involved in the minutiae of everyday life or spend all their spare time watching television. This takes them into a different sphere and helps them to be more understanding and objective."
>
> "It's a wonderful diversion. I'm tied down with five children. I almost enjoyed this more than the week-ends. It's good for people to have outside interests and something to think about and prepare for. I'm planning to take the Humanities program now that this one is over and then I'm going to take extension courses toward my degree."
>
> "These programs are very valuable and important. Until people talk about important issues they don't really know what they themselves think. At the same time they are forced to re-evaluate their own ideas. They also read in areas they wouldn't otherwise study."

A number thought the programs valuable but suggested improvements in the leadership, the materials, or in the composition of the groups.

> "They have some value but could have more. More information should be given and an occasional lecture. There should be an effort to evaluate persons before they join to determine whether they are likely to benefit on the basis of their education and interests."
>
> "I feel there should be a more careful selection of materials and of students' backgrounds. A more judicious mixture of people could be gathered. There weren't enough differences of opinion in our group."
>
> "It was valuable but could have been more so with stronger leadership and better materials."

Those who felt the programs had little value were most critical of the composition of the groups and the leadership.

> "While the readings were provocative, the discussions were not. People did not properly understand each other. The discussions were often meaningless. I would be interested in a more high-level course with pre-screened participants."
>
> "From this experience I'm not very enthusiastic about the program. But it may be better in some other group with different leadership. We got into all sorts of irrelevancies and the leader seemed helpless to guide the discussion effectively."

> "People don't know enough about what's going on in the world to talk about them with others."

For the most part, however, it is clear that the great majority of the participants felt that the discussion experience was a valuable one. They felt it stimulated thinking and in many instances prompted reading in areas in which they otherwise would not have engaged. For a smaller, though significant, number, it created a new level of relationship with spouses and friends.

All the interviewers were struck with the fact that many of the interviewees had been hungry for more meaningful and worthwhile intellectual activities and that the discussion groups tended to meet this need. They were especially impressed with the fact that even those who were quite critical of some aspects of the program nevertheless thought it was valuable and worthwhile.

CASE HISTORIES

To provide a more integrated picture of individual participants in terms of their backgrounds, motivations and their reactions to the discussion program, eight brief case histories are presented here. Five are participants who, in the view of the interviewers, gained from the experience and three who did not profit very much.

(1) Mrs. A is aged 42 and married to the president of an engineering firm. They have an annual income in excess of $15,000. She is a college graduate who majored in history and political science. She is an officer in the League of Women Voters but never participated in formally organized discussion groups before, nor had she taken any courses or classes since leaving college. Mrs. A reads one book, on the average, every two months. These are largely best-seller-list books. She also reads the popular magazines – *Life, Time, Reader's Digest,* etc., and *Presbyterian Life.* She spends no time watching television and sees rather selective films ("Gate of Hell," "Genevieve," etc.) once a month.

Mrs. A enrolled because –

> "My husband showed interest in the Ways of Mankind program, so I called up and we went. I didn't go because of interest in anthropology, but I've always enjoyed discussions and yet would not have gone if my husband hadn't been interested in going to this evening group. We didn't join for any particular useful purpose, but once we got into the course we found it very interesting. We got an objective viewpoint which we could apply to present-day circumstances – but we certainly didn't go into it with that intention."

In answer to the question, "Were there some things you got out of it which you hadn't expected?", Mrs. A replied:

"I'd never had any interest in anthropology and found the approach of applying knowledge about other civilizations to our present life very interesting. You tended to develop an objective viewpoint in understanding how society and government are put together, the warp and woof of your allegiances — like doctors who have much in common with Chinese doctors, etc."

In regard to aspects of the program she liked or disliked, she stated:

"I liked most the dramatic presentation on the records. It was beautifully done. — There was nothing I 'liked least.' We had no preconceived ideas and just found it very enjoyable. One shortcoming is that not all the people were always there. This was a distinct handicap to the discussion. — The leadership was good and I found the materials very interesting.

"The group differed from other classes or courses I've taken in that it was mixed — men and women, rather than just women, as in daytime groups. It differed also in that we weren't part of an organization like the P.T.A. There was no feeling of doing our duty or fulfilling an obligation.

"I don't think I could rank it as being more or less valuable than regular classes. Comparing it with Freedom Agenda, that was a group with a purpose, whereas this was different. It was purely done of our own volition with no particular purpose; this latter being an enjoyable difference that brought my husband out without reluctance. It was valuable to me because my husband enjoyed it." (This reason came up repeatedly in the interview. She had not previously been able to interest him in such groups. He reportedly enjoyed the program immensely because it compelled him to get out of the house — where he would do homework from the office — to explore subject matter he found interesting.)

"In regard to gaining more knowledge about the matters under discussion, I got a glimmer of what anthropology involves but no great knowledge of the field. We did not make elaborate studies or read elaborate studies, but got the ideas from the records, and each person tried seriously to put into words what he was getting out of the material in terms of present-day applicability." (She did not quite feel that what she learned was knowledge, for it was rather insight into contemporary American society as a result of interpretation of simpler societies.)

"We loved the discussion. We formed friendships in the group and enjoy them very much. We plan to start another group in a couple of weeks with the same people as a core."

This participant enrolled primarily because she likes discussion, but a *sine qua non* was that her husband expressed spontaneous interest in the program and she was delighted at being able to get him to do something with her of a cultural nature.

Although she denies (probably rightly) having changed in open-mindedness, she got much new insight into our current problems (like various group loyalties), as well as information from this anthropological program. She was enthusiastic about this unexpected return and also happy at her husband's approval of her type of activity in such things as the League of Women Voters which he had evidently not understood or favored and to which he had not been sympathetic.

Although hardly an intellectual, she struck one as being a very tolerant, receptive person who was so before the course. After the course one would guess she did not change in these basic traits but rather the content of the course put more substance into her general open-minded attitude. As a somewhat liberal Republican, it is doubtful that she got more or less open-minded than she had been, but she learned more — not in the way of facts, especially, but in an understanding that major social and political problems can be understood and solved more intelligently by understanding how other, less advanced societies have dealt with them.

(2) Mrs. B is 30 years old and married to a social scientist. Their income is $7500 a year. She had one year of college. Having two small children, she is not very active in community affairs. Her only organizational membership is in the P.T.A. But it is a fairly inactive membership. She had never been in a discussion group before, nor had she ever taken a course or class since leaving school. She reads the best-sellers, approximately two a month. She watches television about four hours a week, usually the "better" programs: Murrow, "Victory at Sea," "Omnibus," etc.

Mrs. B was a new participant who was interviewed before, during and at the end of the ten-week session in World Politics. Why did she enroll?

> "I don't expect to contribute anything. I expect to learn something about international affairs and world politics. I feel I've been in a rut. The children occupy me so much. All I know about international affairs is what I get from *Newsweek*. I feel as though I haven't been keeping up with things. I'm not exactly sure what I expect to get from the discussion group, but I'd like some mental stimulus, a chance to learn something about international problems."

After the last meeting:

> "The group I was in was very lively, the leaders had trouble keeping everyone from talking at the same time. There were a lot of people there with excellent backgrounds. They knew much more than I did. We got

> to know each other quite well. I made a number of friends there and we see each other socially, too. We've only lived here two years and it was nice to meet such wonderful people.
>
> "What I liked most about it, aside from the friendships I made, was the fact that I learned quite a bit. I spent four hours on the readings each week. If it weren't for the course, I'm sure I wouldn't have read such things. I found myself using them in conversations and feel that I can discuss some things more confidently and adequately than I could before.
>
> "Although the leaders were pretty good, they should have been stronger to keep the discussion in line. It strayed quite a bit and sometimes lost the point. But on the whole it was excellent. It was lots more valuable than a regular course. We got ideas from a lot of different people. Fortunately, most of them were well informed; several had lived in foreign countries for considerable periods of time. I didn't participate very much because I didn't feel qualified to say very much. But I looked forward to the meetings and discussed the issues with my husband when I came home.
>
> "I can't say that I developed any greater ability to express myself clearly because I didn't say much. But I think I would feel so in the next group. I'm planning to join the American Foreign Policy group next but not with the same people. I think I'd feel freer to speak among new people who hadn't been in the first group.
>
> "If a friend were to ask me whether he should enroll, I would encourage him because of what I had been able to get out of it. I think one of the most important things was that we were able to listen to other people's opinions even though we might strongly disagree with them. It also stirred up interest in others, as in me, to read better things. I read different kinds of things in the newspapers now than I did before. I actually look for all the foreign news and read it carefully. I don't just skim. This has been very valuable to me."

Mrs. B is a rather shy, quiet person who has been busy with her family since she married and left school at the end of one year of college. She was obviously seeking intellectual stimulus, as she indicated, but she was also insecure about the fact that she had never finished college, whereas her husband had a Ph.D. Part of her motivation in enrolling was undoubtedly to try to catch up with her husband, to be able to talk to him and to discuss with him more important things and issues than what the children had done during the day.

It was clear that she had gained a great deal both in terms of information and knowledge as well as stimulus to thinking and insights into other points of view. It was also evident that her reading habits had been affected. She reads more carefully and tends to read items in politics and international affairs which she hadn't tended to read in the past. But perhaps the most important effect was her greater self-confidence. The fact that she could begin to talk to her husband about serious things on a more equal level was important. One had the feeling that she and her husband were developing a new facet of their relationship, a new community of interest which hadn't existed before.

The discussion group had the further effect of providing her with new and interesting friends whom her husband liked and respected, too. They were "his kind of people." Previously, most of the friends they had were those associated with him in his work. Now she had contributed to their pool of friends people who were on a par with his associates. This tended to give her a greater sense of equality. She felt somewhat less of an appendage and more secure in her social relationships.

Finally, the fact that there were in the group extremely well-informed women who had not had much more formal schooling than she, inspired her to feel that she, too, could become well-informed and well-educated despite the fact that she did not have a college degree. She was therefore keenly looking forward to the next discussion program on American Foreign Policy with a different group of people where she could make a fresh start. In the next program, she was certain that she would participate more. There is little question that in this case the discussion group had played an important role in the intellectual and social development of Mrs. B.

(3) Mr. C, aged 62, is a high school graduate who owns his own business. His income is in excess of $15,000 a year. He is rather conservative, although he described himself as a "middle-of-the-roader." He was a new participant in a World Politics group and was interviewed three times. He belongs to the Chamber of Commerce and had belonged, at various times, to a number of churches. He had never been in a discussion group nor had he taken any courses or classes in many years.

He reads a good deal, mostly newspapers and magazines like *U.S. News*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. He spends seven to ten hours a week watching popular television programs – Groucho Marx, quiz programs, Ed Murrow, *Meet the Press*, etc. He heard about the discussion program from friends and joined the group with his wife. In answer to the question, "Why did you enroll?", he replied, "I don't know. I guess I wanted to learn something about world politics."

Mr. C enjoyed the meetings very much and regretted having to miss a number of them because of ill health. At the middle interview he said he liked the materials most because they provided an opportunity to read things he would not otherwise have read. At the final interview, however, he said he liked most the "cross-section of opinion and backgrounds, the different foreign backgrounds of people, and the fact that many in the group had traveled a good deal." He liked least the fact that the leaders were too reticent and didn't pursue a sufficient vigorous role.

Mr. C participated in the discussions somewhat less than the others. He did not feel that he had changed any of his ideas or opinions very much, but thought he "might have shaded them a trifle because of the additional information" he had gained. He stated that he had always been willing to listen to views opposed to his own but thought that this had increased as a result of participation in the group.

One of the marked effects the discussion group had, he reported, was on his reading.

> "I suddenly woke up to the fact that I had been neglecting reading of books and had been spending most of my time reading magazines and looking at T.V. I'm now limiting my time given to magazines and T.V. and am diverting more of my time to book reading."

Since joining the group he read Ruark's *Something of Value* and Gouzenko's *Fall of a Titan* and has started to read Churchill's *History of the English-Speaking People.*

Mr. C thought the discussion program a "fine thing" and had considerable value "if it can be kept under control and not permitted to get off the straight and narrow track – if it can help Americans to learn about events all over the world and stimulate them to think – which many of them are not doing."

Mr. C is an older man whose attitudes are pretty well fixed. He has done very well in business and is rather complacent and fairly sure of the validity of his own opinions. Almost all his contacts, social as well as business, have been with business people.

During the first interview it was readily apparent that Mr. C was quite conservative. He expressed concern about subversive influences in the country and felt that one had to be on the lookout for them. During the final interview he confessed that he had been on the lookout for subversive influences in the group but didn't detect any – this in spite of the fact that he heard many views expressed with which he strongly disagreed. In the earlier meetings he was quite concerned about some of the ideas he had heard expressed. Toward the end, however, he listened to them with greater equanimity even though he agreed no more with them than he had at the outset. He now accepted them as honest differences of opinion because he had gotten to know the people and felt they were "good, honest American citizens." He clearly developed a greater willingness to listen and to be more tolerant of ideas and opinions opposed to his own.

It was probably the first time in his life that he had had social contact (the meetings were held in private homes, refreshments being served at the end of the meeting) with foreign-born people. He was especially impressed with them, mentioning them frequently. These were highly cultivated, professional people. They upset Mr. C's image of foreigners as being somehow inferior and probably subversive. He had also had some suspicion of intellectuals and eggheads which seemed to have been somewhat dispelled by the experience.

All in all, it would appear that the discussion program had far more impact on Mr. C than he himself realized. This is all the more remarkable because of his age, associations and essential conservatism. The effects will probably be even more impressive as he continues his readings in the new directions upon which he has started and continues in the discussion program.

(4) Mr. D is a 39-year-old engineer. He earns in excess of $10,000 a year. He is active in politics and in his church. He had been in a Great Books discussion group three years previous to enrolling in a World Politics group. He reads one book about every two months, primarily in history, politics or biography. He also reads *The Reporter, The New Yorker* and *Harper's* regularly. He watches television approximately four to five hours a week – news programs, Murrow, and Meet the Press.

He enrolled in the program with his wife.

"This seemed to be a good opportunity to increase our objectivity – to see more clearly through political problems that arise. Also to increase knowledge.

"In the main, the discussion group met my expectations, since being in the group increased my knowledge of politics and stimulated my interest in archeology, etc.

"One thing I got out of the group which I hadn't expected was that we made some new friends.

"What I liked best about the program were the readings. I enjoyed this more than the discussions themselves, which would be second in what I like about it. The experience helped me in my political club. The objectivity angle helped for a partisan person like me.

"As to the leadership, one was excellent but the other was only fair. Mr. X was able to keep the discussion in the group rather than on himself and when it turned to him he deftly threw the ball back to the group. The other leader, when things were building up to a key point, would ask an irrelevant question and we'd have to start all over again."

Did you gain more knowledge about the matters under discussion?

"Some. It would have been fine to have a specialist on particular topics. A lawyer added to the course because of his knowledge of the law. A school teacher had a fine background and she helped. But it would have been nice to have a political scientist to point things out occasionally."

Do you think most of the members tended to become more open-minded?

"Yes, I sensed that. I even saw it in the case of a woman who was so anti-Roosevelt at first. I knew her political views hadn't changed but I sensed she was more tolerant.

"I think I became more open-minded, too, or perhaps more objective."

General reaction to the program:

"I think these discussion groups help to increase a person's objectivity in reading current events, to help fit them into history, to perhaps be more open-minded, to increase his interest so that he will take a more active role in politics."

This participant enrolled because he felt somewhat uninformed and biased as a partial consequence of having had an engineering education that had virtually no humanities or social science content. In this program he experienced an opening of the mind to other viewpoints without actually changing any fundamental ones of his own. In short, contact with the other half.

It really appeared to have increased his knowledge of, interest in, and feel for political problems. He was probably open-minded to begin with but was somewhat calmed down in his engineer-like expectation of ready, simple, well-programmed solutions to the major political problems of our time. He also seemed to have gained an appreciation of the value of discussion as opposed to the passive ingestion of a teacher's or writer's knowledge. In the opinion of the interviewer he is more critical-minded now.

(5) Mrs. E is a registered nurse married to a physician. She had trained for nursing upon graduation from high school. She is 49 years old and hasn't been nursing for many years. She is active in church and hospital work.

She had never been in a discussion group before but had taken a drawing class within the previous three years. Her reading has been largely of a religious nature. The books she had read most recently were by Bishop Sheen. She also reads *Time, National Geographic,* and *The Saturday Evening Post* regularly. She spends seven hours a week watching television, usually quiz programs.

Mrs. E enrolled in the Ways of Mankind group because she was "interested in hearing other people's ideas. I didn't really know quite what to expect."

The group met her expectations. It was "exactly what I went for – to hear different points of view. I also learned things that helped me in relation to my children – the whole problem of authority, etc."

Mrs. E felt she gained a great deal of knowledge from the discussions although on occasion she wished a specialist had been present.

In regard to any change in her views as a result of the discussions, she said:

> "Yes, I changed my conceptions of authority and domination. I became more democratic. I should say I did!"

She felt that she and the others in the group developed a greater ability to express themselves, and tended to become more open-minded.

In general, she felt the discussion groups provided a valuable opportunity to expand one's views. The fact that the group met in her neighborhood (she lives quite a distance from the University) was very appealing.

Mrs. E seemed to be a person of rather limited background who was seeking intellectual and cultural interests. She appeared to be somewhat lonely. Her children are in their teens and no longer very dependent upon her. She probably felt at a loss because she no longer felt needed.

She apparently gained some knowledge about anthropology in the group. She had never done any reading in the field and was quite strongly affected by the experience. She is a devout Catholic. By her own testimony, she had been extremely authoritarian in her relations with her children. This probably caused a gap between them when the children reached their teens. The discussions obviously made her aware of her authoritarian attitudes and caused her to examine them for the first time. As a result, she began to change the pattern of her relations with her children. This re-examining and "soul searching" led her to take a course in philosophy after she finished the Ways of Mankind group.

While Mrs. E probably did not gain a great deal of basic information from the discussion group, it unquestionably started a train of self-analysis and re-examination of values which may well have considerable impact upon her.

(6) Mrs. F is 50 years old. She is a high school graduate with one year of business college and is office manager in her husband's insurance firm. She is active in women's clubs and in the Republican Women's Club. She had never been in a discussion group, nor had she taken any courses in recent years. She reads the *Los Angeles Times* about an hour a day but never reads any books. She reads *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Sports Illustrated*

regularly. She watches television more than thirty hours a week. The programs she watches regularly are "Comedy Hour," "Symphony Hour," and "fights, and all sports." Other ways in which she spends her time; "attending all sports events, fishing, gardening and bees."

Mrs. F enrolled in a Ways of Mankind group with her husband.

> "I went along because of my husband. I thought the program would be good for my husband's business, help him make contacts. I never had much to say in groups. I thought this would help."

In regard to her expectations, Mrs. F stated, "I really didn't know what to expect, so I can't say what met my expectations and what didn't."

Although she did not say so at this point, she implied from other conversation that she did talk a bit more toward the end. What she liked most was "listening to others' viewpoints. Everyone read the same thing and then branched off." She liked the subject least: "Other subjects would have been more interesting. We kept getting away from the main subject. I couldn't see why Eskimos were brought in."

Mrs. F didn't think she gained anything useful, "but since then, in talking with other people in business every once in a while I find the talking techniques I learned in the group come through."

She felt the "leadership was very good, considering they were pioneering." She thought the leader had difficulty at times "getting the point over," but believed the coordinator's enthusiasm "held the group together. There was excellent attendance."

There was rotating leadership in the group. Mrs. F thought it worked very well. "Each person could pick out what he wanted to talk about and then could be prepared when his turn to lead came up. Everyone who led did a very good job. They always filled in the lulls."

When asked whether she liked the materials, Mrs. F commented, "No really good, heated discussions came from them. I would rather have skipped reading the conversation manual (discussion manual). If we just listened to the record we would get more out of it. Of course I don't get much out of reading anyway. We should have more interesting conversation and incorporate it into the reading matter."

Mrs. F said that she usually read all the material for each meeting. She felt the discussion group was different from other classes she had taken in that "everyone was there to discuss and share ideas" – "in other classes you didn't volunteer information. You always waited until asked."

Was it more or less valuable than other classes she had taken? "It was less valuable. You had an opportunity to talk, but you didn't learn anything from the lessons, though maybe you did somewhat from the conversation."

She indicated that a few members of the group tended to dominate the discussion. When asked how this was handled by the leader, she replied:

> "At first she let everyone talk as much as they wanted. Then she let the co-leader check the time and stop people if they talked too long. Then the leader kept a mark for each time a person talked. At the end of the meeting she showed how much each person had talked. Perhaps some who talked too much were embarrassed. Later people raised their hands when they wanted to speak. I had a better chance then, because the leader would give preference to those who didn't get to say much before."

In answer to the question, "Do you think most of the members tended to become more open-minded?", she answered:

> "We had a coffee hour, a week or so after the session ended, of women participants only. These women said that this was the first time they were ever in the same discussion with the men. Women are probably more open-minded than men because they have to think out the subject so clearly in order not to be ridiculed by husbands afterwards. I had NEVER been in a discussion on an equal basis with my husband before. All of the women liked this."

Mrs. F reported that the discussion group had no effect on her reading habits. She doesn't read more than she did nor different materials than she did before. She did form some friendships in the group, people whom she sees now.

As to whether any extreme views were ever expressed and how these views were treated by the group, Mrs. F said, "Mr. X was extremely anti-New Deal and Labor; however, from the beginning we agreed to exclude religion and politics from the discussion so when these items came up – we would stop and change the subject."

Mrs. F enrolled in the group almost solely because her husband was interested in belonging and she went along, too. She did not get very much from the discussion experience that can be seen on the surface. Perhaps being in the same group and talking as an equal with her husband was the most important aspect of the experience. Also, it appears that she has learned to speak up more easily – one or two more sessions in subject areas of interest to her would probably help her greatly. However, she can never be helped very much unless her current attitudes and motivations change.

Mrs. F disliked the subject matter. She did not see how Eskimo know-how, or philosophy of life and death, had anything to do with our civilization and problems. She felt that she did not have enough opportunity to say things – that frequently she wanted to say something but someone beat her to it and said the same thing, leaving her with nothing to add.

However, the most intriguing dimension involved her certainty that there was a Communist in each of these groups. Before the program began, she and several other women (some who came into the program, some who did not) decided it would be interesting to see how Communism would enter into the discussion. During the session they came to the conclusion that the sponsoring institution was not communistic. They further decided that *these* materials did not have communist propaganda in them after all, and by the end of the session they determined that the communist influence was not in this program, which was to "soften" the group, but would be in the second group. Hence they are now convinced that in the World Affairs group (although this was not made precisely clear) the subject matter, being more controversial, would eventually come around to being pro-Communist. It is interesting that all of this discussion has taken place away from the Liberal Arts group itself – in women's clubs, etc. When the interviewer asked why she thought these were communistic, she replied that the Ford Foundation backing the program made them suspicious and they determined that this was the way Communist cells get started. The interviewer believed she and her friends were actually disappointed that they did not find a member of the Communist Party in the group.

(7) Mrs. G is aged 38 and divorced. She works for a large public utility corporation in a staff position doing personnel training and executive development. She had one year of college and earns between $5,000 and $7,500 a year.

Mrs. G is active in the Business and Professional Women's Club as well as in the Speakers' Bureau of the March of Dimes. She has been in discussion groups in the club and at her place of business but has not been in any sponsored by an educational institution or agency. She has taken three courses during the past three years in Creative Writing, Creative Thinking and Labor Economics.

She reads the *Los Angeles Times* about one hour a day and reads from two to three books a month. The last three books she read are: Peter Drucker, *Practice of Management;* Robert Heilbronner, *The Worldly Philosophers;* Anne Lindbergh, *Gift from the Sea.* She also reads regularly *Time, Changing Times, The National Geographic,* and *Adult Leadership.*

Mrs. G watches television six to seven hours a week. Her regular programs are: "Studio One," "What's My Line?", "You Are There," "Telephone Hour," and George Gobel. She attends motion picture theatres about once a year. The last picture she saw was "The Man with the Golden Arm."

Other ways in which she spends her leisure time are knitting and camping. With friends she listens to records, plays cards or engages in social conversation.

She enrolled in the Humanities group with a friend because of "a general interest in broadening my background" (her company favors this). She also wanted a "beginner's course."

The discussion group met her expectations only partially. She "would have enjoyed it more if it had been more of a discussion group. It tended to be more of a lecture program. The leader liked to lecture."

What she liked most about the program was "being with the people, listening to them." What she liked least was, "the times we were held down from exchanging ideas because of the lecture." The things she learned from the experience which were useful to her elsewhere were, "working with people and techniques of holding conferences."

She thought the leadership was poor. "If it was to be a discussion group — he failed. He didn't let the group discuss what they wanted to. He disparaged the materials and confused the group. When there was discussion he did not control it enough." Mrs. G thought the leadership could be improved by "managing the group more skilfully. Suggest more open-ended questions. Get discussion started better. Use more listening techniques."

She found the materials very interesting but was "confused and disappointed with the music section. It was too mechanical. I would have enjoyed more on architecture. There were too few audio-visual aids. The phonograph was bad. I would also like to see the poetry section visualized." Mrs. G usually read all the material for each meeting, spending one evening or more in preparation.

She thought the discussion group was more valuable to her than other classes or courses she had taken. "It was interesting to see what happened with less organization." In regard to gaining more knowledge about the matters under discussion, she learned a great deal "in art, some in literature, but very little in music." She felt the leader knew most about art and that this helped make the art section more profitable. "In other parts, the leader was not as well informed as he thought."

A few members, "a couple of semi-experts," tried to dominate the discussion. The leader handled these attempts at domination by "shutting us all up and beginning to lecture." There was greater participation by more members at the later meetings than at the earlier ones. This was not true of her. In general, she participated in the discussions as much as the others.

Mrs. G reported that there were indications that members of the group changed their views as a result of the discussions. "They got different views of the subjects." This was true for her, too. "I got a new slant on architecture and art."

> "Everybody seemed to enjoy the meetings. We went for coffee afterwards, together. They tended to like the art most and the music section least."

But she did not feel that most of the possible differing points of view on the subjects discussed were usually brought out. "Sometimes they were squashed. It was the leader's fault." Nor did she think that the members tended to become more open-minded. "No, for lack of real discussion. Those who agreed with the leader had no problem. Those opposed to him just sat there and fumed."

Mrs. G did not form any friendships in the group.

She did not think that members of the group expressed their views with complete freedom. "Many were intimidated by the leader." In answer to the question, "Were any extreme views ever expressed?", she replied, "Yes, an Englishman who said, 'No American appreciates nature.' An American who said, 'All American art is a bastardization of a pure art form.' These and similar shocking comments scared others, the less articulate ones, from joining in."

How were these views treated in the group? "Some fought back or tried to. The Englishman dropped out."

In answer to the question, "If a friend were to ask you whether he should enroll in one of the discussion groups, what would you tell him?", she answered, "If I knew that the friend had a wide background, no! The same material is taught in many of the better parochial schools."

In general, Mrs. G approved of the idea of discussion groups and hopes that they will continue. She is in favor of lay leadership despite her criticism of the specific leader of her group.

This participant is very eager to learn. She is taking a variety of courses and classes all the time, partly for self-improvement, partly also because her company evidently appreciates this kind of extra effort.

As to what she got out of it, at best, she received a certain over-view of the humanities, without any concomitant desire to deepen her study of them. She seems to have been blocked in her progress by strong resentment of the leader.

She did not appear to have learned much. She was so preoccupied disliking the leader and his lecturing, while also being too permissive in the straight discussion phase, that there simply wasn't any room left for her to learn in. The leader problem simply became overpowering. And that is regrettable, because she seemed to be a woman with a great eagerness for learning and with a sufficiently wide range of interests to make the course potentially quite valuable to her.

(8) Mrs. H is 37 years of age and married to a physician. She has a bachelor's degree in education from a mid-western college. The family income is more than $15,000 a year.

Mrs. H is somewhat active in church and hospital work. She had never been in a discussion group before but had enrolled in a "Pre-School Children's Workshop" within the preceding three years.

She spends a half to three-quarters of an hour reading the daily newspaper. The last three books she read were: Wouk's *Marjorie Morningstar,* Schindler's *How to Live 365 Days a Year,* and Anne Lindbergh's *Gift from the Sea.* She tends to read about three books a year. She also reads *Life, Ladies' Home Journal, Better Homes and Gardens,* and *Changing Times* regularly.

Mrs. H watches television about fifteen hours a week. The programs she watches regularly are: quiz programs, "This Is Your Life," Groucho Marx, and mysteries. She goes to the movies on the average of twice a month. The last three films she had seen were: "Man Who Never Was," "Marty," and "Benny Goodman."

She likes to travel and sews a good deal. With friends, she and her husband "talk – with professional people – shop talk; nothing particularly. Occasionally we play bridge."

Mrs. H enrolled in a Ways of Mankind group, "mostly because I've gotten into a rut, having a small child, during the last three and a half years. Both my husband and I thought it would be good to do something together." When asked what she expected to get out of it, Mrs. H replied, "I don't know. I expect to meet new people, share ideas and stimulating thought. It's something new. I want to be able to express myself more fluently."

Mrs. H, a new participant, was interviewed three times. At the end of the first interview, which took place just prior to the first meeting of the group, the interviewer commented:

> "For a college person, Mrs. H is poorly educated. Her interests don't appear to be broad or self-sustained. She seems rather poorly informed."

In regard to open-mindedness, the interviewer commented, "Mrs. H is perhaps average. She is not open-minded because I rather doubt that she has had reason to open her mind. Not closed-minded because she perhaps has not had the alternative of accepting or rejecting new ideas. My impression as to why the participant really enrolled is that she had a sense of the need to learn more about public affairs. There was also probably a mutual desire on both their parts to do something together outside of the usual social routine.

"Her main reason for joining, I think, was to get out of a feeling of being tied down to motherhood with their small child. Other factors are secondary but significant. If she and her husband stick with the group for the stated reasons of getting out of their separate routines as housewife and physician and out of their joint social routine, I would guess that they would get more out of the group than other, better-informed, more socially conscious people."

In the third interview, after the discussion series was over, Mrs. H reported that the discussion group met her expectations. "It was very interesting and informative. Meeting with other people and discussing problems was enjoyable and informative. It was an opportunity to think about something different. I wasn't disappointed in any way."

In answer to the question, "Were there some things you got out of it which you hadn't expected?", she replied, "I got some new ideas but I expected to get new ideas. They talked about the life of the Alaskan Indians and other primitive folks. I hadn't known about their culture."

> "I think what I liked most about it was just meeting and talking about the subject matter in a discussion group. There was nothing I didn't like about it."
>
> "I don't think I learned anything that was useful elsewhere, though I suppose I should say I did."
>
> "The leadership was good. They kept the ball rolling and threw out enough leading questions to get other people to talk but participated enough to keep it going."
>
> "The materials were interesting. It made me think along lines I hadn't bothered to think about. It provided a new train of thought. The records were better than the text because more realistic but the combination of both is good. If you read it, too, you have a little more chance to think about it. I spent about fifteen minutes in preparation for each meeting."
>
> "The group differed from other classes in that there was more active participation. Everyone did get into the discussion. I think maybe this kind of class is more valuable. I think the discussing angle might make you think it through a bit more. You get other people's ideas and thus get a variety of experience. I gained a great deal more knowledge about the matters under discussion."

In regard to whether she missed a subject-matter specialist, she said,

> "No, I don't think a specialist would help. He would probably use technical language that wouldn't help."

Mrs. H stated that she tended to participate in the discussions less than the others and did not participate more at later meetings than at earlier meetings.

She thought the group was made up of pretty much the same kind of people. She described the group and herself as middle-of-the-roaders. She didn't think she could answer whether there were any indications that other members changed their views as a result of the discussions. She didn't think that she had "changed any, really."

> "The group enjoyed the meetings. This was indicated by the fact that they came and participated. What they liked most was the discussion. I wasn't aware there was anything we didn't like."

In answer to the question of whether most of the members tended to become more open-minded:

> "I really can't remember too much, honestly. I can't remember that we were intolerant to begin with." (Interviewer's comment: "In her case I'd guess it was more lack of involvement than tolerance. The night I observed, she got a little disturbed about the status problem, but her concern did not persist and did not seem to change her favoring the granting of prestige and high status to those who were in professional, etc., positions.")

Mrs. H stated that there was no change in her reading habits, nor had she read any books within the previous ten weeks. She indicated that she and her husband were planning to enroll in another group.

Mrs. H didn't seem to have gotten much at all from the discussion group except the pleasant experience of the discussions at the time they were being held. She was not disappointed in her expectations but was virtually unaffected by the experience.

She had no criticism or reservations about the study-discussion groups. If she had been more involved in the whole group process she probably would not have been critical either, but her infrequent attendance and lack of any real criticisms are not so much an implicit criticism of the discussion group process as they are an indication that she had no great need or desire to be stirred mentally.

Eight cases have been presented above, five of which, in the opinion of the interviewers, profited from participation in the discussion groups and three of which did not gain very much from the experience.

Although no pattern emerges which would clearly explain why those in the first group gained from the experience and those in the second did not, some conjectures may be made. First, amount of formal schooling does not appear to have been an important factor. Among the first five, two were college graduates. Two had some schooling beyond high school, and one participant's schooling was limited to high school. In the second group, one was a college graduate, one had had one year of college, and the third, high school only. In the first group, those without a college degree were, if anything, more affected and influenced by the discussion group than those with college degrees. Again, among the three who did not appear to gain very much from the experience, the college graduate seemed to have profited least of all.

General interest in ideas and books seems to have been a stronger factor leading to a more profitable experience. Although this need not have been very strong, some incipient interest was characteristic of almost all of those who gained from having participated in a discussion group.

But the strongest factor would appear to be the initial motivation in joining a group. The motivations of those in the first group were invariably stronger. They sought intellectual stimulus, they were interested in the subjects to be discussed, they were motivated by a desire for self-improvement, or they wanted to share a serious, intellectual experience with their husbands.

In the second group one woman joined largely because she thought it would help her husband's business and secondarily to see whether there were any Communists in the program. A second woman, while indicating that she felt she was in a rut, had only the vaguest notion of what she hoped to get from the discussion group – and was most interested in participating in a pleasant social experience with her husband. The third person was the only one in the second group whose motivations were somewhat similar to those in the first group. But apparently her dislike of the leader prevented her from getting as much from the experience as she might have. Her criticism of the leader was not entirely unjustified. Perhaps in a group with better leadership she might have gained more.

Perhaps the most striking point is that even those in the second group felt that they had profited from participating in a discussion group and the interviewers conceded that they may have profited somewhat. The woman, for example, who joined to help her husband's business and because she was curious to see whether there was communist influence in the group, was greatly struck, as were other women in the group, with the fact that this was the first time she had engaged in the discussion of serious ideas on a par with her husband. Had this been a better group, the impact might well have been greater. The leadership of this group was quite mechanical. Even worse, the very purpose of the program was defeated by the decision to avoid controversial discussions, religion and politics being proscribed at the very outset. If controversial issues are excluded from the programs their value is largely lost.

What becomes clear is that just as a variety of backgrounds and motivations characterize the participants, so different people gain different things from the experience. Many profit in several ways, others gain very little, if anything. But even in the case of the latter, with better leadership and materials they could conceivably gain far more.

Furthermore, it is evident that for many the greatest gains were not in the area of increased information or knowledge alone. Some gained new insights, modified their viewpoints, learned to listen more tolerantly to views opposed to their own, and gained self-confidence. For a few the impact was very strong indeed. They not only gained new confidence, but were stimulated to read more serious things, to continue their intellectual development, and in several instances, developed new and richer relationships with their husbands.

Part Four

THE LEADERS

84-85

THE LEADERS

Background

Fifty leaders were interviewed, twenty-five with past experience and twenty-five who were leading a group for the first time. Of the total, twenty-nine were men and twenty-one were women. The great majority (80 per cent) were married, 14 per cent were divorced and six per cent were single. The median age was 38, six being under 31 and eight past 55.

The median number of years of schooling was 17.5. Forty-one of the leaders (82 per cent) were college graduates. Almost half the leaders had majored in the humanities or the social sciences. Twelve had majored in science or engineering, five in business administration.

Of the college graduates, nineteen had graduate or professional degrees. Four were lawyers, two were M.D.'s and three had Ph.D.'s. The largest single occupational category by far was professional (52 per cent); the second, housewife. The rest were business executives, in sales or in supervisory positions, except for one, who was a graduate student. There were no skilled or industrial workers among the leaders. The median annual income of the leaders was between $7500 and $10,000.

More than half the leaders had lived in their respective communities over eleven years, sixteen more than twenty-one years. Eleven had lived in their present communities less than four years.

The leaders are active in community activities. Eighty-six per cent participate in at least one or more community activities. Of the forty-three leaders participating in community activities, thirty reported holding office in one or more organizations.

Not only was the educational level higher among leaders than among participants (median years of schooling 17.5, compared with 15.3, and 82 per cent college graduates among leaders as compared with 59 per cent among the participants), but they were typically more active in communal activities. They were also notably more active in political organizations and social agencies. The leaders tended to be highly conscious of their community and civic obligations.

Eighty-two per cent of the leaders had been in discussion groups before. This high percentage is not surprising, however, in view of the fact that the majority of discussion leaders are drawn from among discussion group participants. Fifty-two per cent had taken classes or courses within the preceding three years. As a group, then, they are characteristically people who engage in continuing education and are active in their communities.

All but six read the newspapers regularly, the majority spending approximately thirty-five minutes a day on newspaper reading. In addition to local newspapers, four read the *Christian Science Monitor,* three *The Wall Street Journal,* and three *The New York Times.*

Approximately a fourth of the leaders reported that they normally read more than three books a month. Nineteen stated they read two or three books a month, nine read a book a month, seven less than a book a month, and three indicated that they do not read books very much.

Seventy-four per cent of the leaders stated that they prefer nonfiction books. Of the last three books they actually reported reading, 56 per cent were nonfiction. Their magazine reading was comparably serious. A large percentage reported that they regularly read such magazines as *Harper's, The Saturday Review, The Atlantic,* and *The Reporter.*

Twelve reported that they never watch television, twenty-six that they watch less than four hours a week, and ten more than four hours a week. The majority tend to watch the more serious programs – news, dramas, etc.

Thirty-one go to a motion picture theatre less than once a month. Most of the others see approximately two pictures a month. On the whole, they are fairly selective in their choice of motion pictures. A high percentage see foreign films when they are available.

Twenty-seven of the leaders reported that they had led discussions previously. Three had led World Politics groups before and three had led Great

Books groups. The remaining twenty-one had led groups in churches or organizations.

Thirty-six had been through the American Foundation for Political Education or Liberal Arts discussion leadership training programs. Six had never received any training. The others had received discussion training in schools or in the Great Books program. The majority became leaders because they were interested in the discussion program or the subject matter or because the director had interested them in becoming leaders.

Leaders' Reactions to the Discussion Group Experience

Fifty-eight per cent of the leaders reported that their groups were successful, 32 per cent that they were only moderately successful, and 10 per cent that their groups were not successful.

Among the reasons given by those leaders who thought their groups were successful were: the indications that the members enjoyed the discussions, found them stimulating; many continued into another group; the majority learned a good deal; most learned to discuss controversial issues amicably; many developed new tastes and interests; quite a few changed some ideas and attitudes; the participation was excellent; many did reading they would not otherwise do; attendance was good; and several in the group became leaders.

Among the comments made by those who thought their groups were very successful, the following are of interest:

> "Yes, excellent; attendance was good. They were vitally interested. Four or five people said they had changed attitudes or opinions where it could make a difference. They developed tolerance of other points of view, although everyone didn't change."
>
> "Very. An unusually good group, an informed group. They were basically interested in the subject. They were articulate. They were ready to accept the fact that a prerequisite of a good discussion was to read the materials carefully."
>
> "Yes, it was very successful. It gave people an opportunity to enjoy learning and discussion. It exposed them to a reappraisal of man and values. It helped them to reappraise their own views and attitudes. It was very stimulating."

Some of the reasons cited by those leaders who thought their groups were only moderately successful or poor were: the group was too small or the attendance was poor; only a small percentage of the participants gained very much; not enough men in the group; the members didn't have adequate backgrounds; the materials were poor; and the rotating leadership didn't work out well.

Typical of the comments of those who felt their groups were but moderately successful were these:

> "It was only fairly successful. The group was small. Participation was good, but the materials (Ways of Mankind) were somewhat deficient. I've had better groups. This one was not a failure but it wasn't an outstanding success. The members didn't do much outside reading but they had a nice social time."
>
> "That's a loaded question. Some didn't get too much out of it but some got a good deal. By and large if the reactions of the participants on the evaluation sheets and in person are valid some got a good deal out of it."

Two of those who reported that their groups were not successful commented:

> "No, I don't believe so. I didn't feel the group accomplished what it could have. The materials (World Affairs) were extremely poor and the rotating leadership plan worked out very poorly."
>
> "I doubt it. The group was too small; there were seldom over ten people. About six enjoyed it thoroughly but they didn't have the background for good discussion. They relied on the leader too much."

Approximately half the leaders (52 per cent) reported evidence of an increase in understanding and tolerance of other points of view. Twenty-eight per cent indicated that this was so "in some cases." Fourteen per cent reported that it was difficult to tell, and six per cent stated that they could detect no evidence of any increase in understanding and tolerance of other points of view.

In most cases those answering in the affirmative cited examples but in some instances they indicated that while they couldn't give any specific examples, they were sure that increased understanding and tolerance did develop.

Typical of the comments were these:

> "Five or six frankly said they had changed in a significant way. At the outset they were very much against Nehru and his policy of neutrality. They felt he was playing right into the hands of the Communists. But later they said maybe he had a point. Changes in views evolved. Similar changes occurred in regard to the problem of the tuna fish monopoly and the Japanese."
>
> "Yes, I was very encouraged by this development. The group became readier to accept differences in culture and values than they had been previously."

Those who weren't sure or answered in the negative in regard to increased understanding or tolerance of other points of view, explained:

> "Not so much in this program as in the Economic Reasoning program. Most of the people who came to this program were pretty openminded to begin with."

or,

> "They became more cognizant of other points of view but not necessarily more tolerant of them."

A majority of the leaders reported that in many instances members who had participated very little at the outset increasingly participated and contributed to the discussion at the later meetings. Forty-eight per cent of the leaders reported a tendency on the part of participants to express themselves more clearly and logically as the program progressed. This was evidenced by greater caution in making sweeping generalizations, greater precision in their use of terms and better formulation of ideas or arguments. As to the skill of their groups in identifying issues and areas of needed information, 10 per cent reported their groups as having been "very skillful"; 62 per cent of the leaders thought their groups were "fair." The remaining leaders reported their groups were not very skillful in this regard.

In answer to the question, "Did sharp conflicts in viewpoint and ideas occur?", 48 per cent of the leaders answered "yes"; 52 per cent answered in the negative. Most of the leaders answering "no" attributed the lack of disagreement and controversy either to the nature of the materials or to the composition of the group. As perhaps might be expected, there was more difference of opinion in the World Politics and World Affairs groups than in the Ways of Mankind and Humanities groups, although in some of the latter groups there were sharp differences of opinion over modern art. Many of the leaders felt that the absence of controversy in the Ways of Mankind and Humanities groups was not entirely attributable to the subject matter as such, but to the method of presentation and to the fact that the average participant was not as knowledgeable in these fields nor did he tend to be as emotionally involved as in political questions.

The composition of the group was frequently a factor. The leaders reported that in most Los Angeles groups and in many Pasadena groups, although to a somewhat lesser degree, the participants were largely liberal or middle-of-the-roaders with but a small percentage of conservatives. Only in Whittier were the groups more balanced, having a fair proportion of conservatives as well as liberals. Typical comments:

> "Yes, sharp conflicts did occur between extreme liberals and extreme conservatives. There were hard and hurt feelings for a while. Gradually, they toughened and learned to accept the give-and-take

> without hard feelings. Actually, those occasions when sharp differences of opinion were voiced were the best sessions."
>
> "In the first few sessions, people were uncomfortable when conflicts occurred and became hesitant. After the group became integrated, however, conflict was more easily accepted and used constructively. The complexity of many issues became more readily apparent and the participants began to realize that on many crucial issues there weren't easy solutions or answers readily available."
>
> "No, there weren't any sharp differences, but it may have been my fault, I had been a Great Books leader and the director warned me not to be too aggressive. Perhaps I leaned over backwards and was not aggressive enough."
>
> "There was a tendency to be tactful rather than pursue conflict of ideas. This is one of the basic reasons why the group was not successful."

Thirty-eight per cent of the leaders reported marked evidence of increased reading and changes in the kind of things read by the participants as a result of the discussions. An additional 34 per cent of the leaders reported that this was true of a few cases in each of their groups.

In regard to greater community activity by participants as a result of the discussions, only nine of the fifty leaders reported that this had occurred in their groups. Of those answering in the negative, eight pointed out that many in their groups were already quite active in community activities. Three suggested that programs like Ways of Mankind and Introduction to the Humanities were not particularly likely to stimulate participation in community activities. Several remarked that while they had no evidence, the programs probably made some members more susceptible.

Those leaders who answered affirmatively reported specific cases of people who became active in some community activity like the League of Women Voters or a political club. Four leaders indicated that a number of participants in their groups became discussion leaders, and viewed this as an important community activity.

The Materials

The reaction of the leaders to the materials tended to follow the same pattern as that of the participants. In response to the question, "Did you find the materials satisfactory?", the answers were as follows:

	Ways of Mankind	*Humanities*	*World Politics*	*World Affairs*	*Total*
Number	13	13	13	12	51
Yes	6	3	12	4	25
Fair	3	4	1	5	13
No	4	6		3	13

As was the case with the participants, the World Politics materials received the highest degree of approval. As a matter of fact, of the twelve answering "Yes," seven said the materials were excellent. Only one leader in a Ways of Mankind group thought those materials were excellent. None of the leaders in Humanities and World Affairs groups thought the materials were excellent. The five leaders in World Affairs groups who thought the materials were fair, all reported that they thought the materials were outdated.

The leaders of Ways of Mankind groups were almost unanimous in feeling that the materials were too thin, that they lacked depth and sufficient background material. Several felt that there was too much overlapping of ideas in a number of the sessions. One leader went so far as to say that he believed the materials were written on a high school level, that they were too immature, and, in the absence of a bibliography, did not stimulate further reading. Another felt that because of the inadequacy of the materials the participants "did not realize that they were getting but one aspect of a culture to make a point. They seemed to think they were getting a full picture of these cultures." All the leaders agreed that the recordings were good, five stating that they were excellent.

Asked to suggest improvements in the materials, eight of the twelve leaders recommended that more background materials and readings be provided. Two suggested that materials be added which presented opposing points of view and interpretations. Three felt that there was no point in having the text of the recordings. They thought the recordings were good but that supplementary text should be substituted for the text of the recordings.

The Humanities materials were regarded as too academic, poorly written and frequently obscure as well as repetitive. They felt the materials were not discussable enough and that the chapters on architecture and music were too technical and complicated. Most of the leaders agreed that the music recordings were good, but eight thought the pictures were poor, largely because they were too small. Several suggested stereoscopic slide projections. Two objected to the selections, wanting to know why "the religious theme was emphasized."

As for improving them, eight leaders suggested that they be re-written because they were too academic and pompous. They felt the presentations should be simplified and made more comprehensible. Three leaders thought that different points of view and interpretations should be included.

The only criticism voiced of the World Politics materials, this by two leaders, was that they were a little too long.

As indicated above, the greatest criticism of the World Affairs materials was that they were out of date. Several felt that they were too one-sided and did not present opposing points of view. Three leaders felt they covered much too broad areas for each of the sessions, all of Africa in a single evening, for example. Seven of the World Affairs leaders thought the films poor, either because they were out of date or because they were not especially pertinent to the issues raised in the text and in the discussions.

Aspects of Discussion Leadership

Asked to assess their leadership and indicate what, in retrospect, they would have done differently, twenty-two of the fifty leaders thought they should have been more directive. They felt they had been too laissez-faire and as a result too much time was spent in irrelevant discussion. By the same token, important issues which should have been discussed were never even mentioned. Several also voiced the view that, by their being more directive and probing, the discussions might have achieved more depth and progression.

Eleven leaders reported that they would not have modified their leadership technique, while nine felt they should have been less directive. Said one of the latter, for example, "I probably should have been less directive. I think perhaps I was too concerned with content but realize now that the experience of discussion was more important than the content."

A number of the leaders, six, felt they should have spent more time at the outset explaining the program better, its objectives and the discussion method. They thought that, in spite of the fact that the brochures announced them as being discussion groups, a number of participants were unclear as to the nature of a discussion program in contrast to the typical classes or courses they had attended in the past. These leaders thought that the dissatisfaction of some of the participants might have been dissipated had more adequate explanation been provided at the outset.

Four leaders felt that they should have prepared more adequately and read more. They did not believe that the provided readings alone were sufficient for the leaders, but that more outside reading was essential if they were to function adequately.

In regard to utilizing rotating leaders from among members of the group, only fifteen leaders of the fifty interviewed recommended it. Of these, eight were Whittier leaders. Even among those recommending its use, many suggested greater care in selecting those who were to lead and closer supervision and direction of the rotating leaders.

Those recommending their use thought it was a good experience for the members, that it made them better participants, reduced the focus on a single person as the leader, and provided a testing and training ground for new leaders. Those who opposed using the participants as discussion leaders on a rotating basis gave the following reasons: Most of the participants are not equipped or trained to be discussion leaders. Even the regular leaders who have been especially selected and trained need more experience and training to do a really competent job. The discussion suffers from the uneven quality of rotating leaders. It is unfair to the great majority of participants whose motivation in coming is not to learn to become discussion leaders.

The majority of leaders reported considerable difference and improvement in the discussions at the final meetings as compared with the earlier meetings. Half the leaders said there was more participation toward the end, members talked more freely, the atmosphere was more informal and relaxed and the group was more self-confident. Approximately a quarter of the leaders stated that as the meetings progressed, members discussed issues more relevantly, were more inquiring and analytical and expressed themselves more clearly and precisely. Several leaders reported no noticeable difference, and two stated that their groups deteriorated because of poor attendance.

Leaders' Evaluation of Significance and Value of Programs

Asked to comment generally on the program and whether they would recommend it to friends, all the leaders interviewed replied that they thought the discussion program was a worthwhile educational experience, one which they would unhesitatingly recommend to friends. All but two of the fifty leaders reported that most of the members in their groups were pleased with the experience, many being enthusiastic.

The majority felt that participants in the groups were re-awakened intellectually and stimulated to think; members learned to listen and to respect the views of others as well as to discuss. They reported that many developed new insights and interests in addition to increasing their knowledge of the subject matter.

Approximately a third of the leaders commented that members of their groups learned to think and express themselves more clearly. An equal number reported that participants were stimulated to do outside reading, to read more critically and in many instances read material they would not otherwise have read. Six leaders mentioned the social relationships and new friendships which developed in their groups.

Typical of leaders' comments as to what they thought the participants got out of the discussion group are the following:

> "Because of the wonderful materials (World Politics), everyone got at least the opportunity to examine new viewpoints on the issues under discussion. It was a real revelation. Precision of thinking was necessary for either pro or con discussions. This was very valuable."
>
> "Many are now doing outside reading. Several said they read the

> newspaper with a different eye now. They feel they have a better understanding of the problems of our government and of the peoples of other countries."
>
> "More insight into the creative artist and his attempt to communicate ideas. More familiarity with the arts. All gained in respect and enjoyment of each other. Friendships were formed. One of the most cantankerous and critical ones at the outset has signed up for another group and can't wait until it begins."
>
> "They gained quite a bit in subject matter knowledge, learned to discuss effectively and to listen to opposing viewpoints with greater forbearance. They read materials they would probably never have read otherwise. Some developed new tastes and interests which I am sure will remain with them for the rest of their lives."

All but three of the leaders felt that they had benefited from the experience. More than two-thirds of the leaders cited increased knowledge of the subject matter and discussion leadership skills among the benefits gained. Others mentioned the fact that they learned to control their own opinions and to listen to others, improved their ability to relate to other people, or learned to express themselves better.

It was also apparent that for some of the leaders there were other values involved beyond increased knowledge or skills. One leader, for example, commented, "It came at an important time. I had been getting stale. I had been putting in too much time on my engineering work and was losing touch with the more important things in life. Leading the discussion group, the entire experience, the discussions and the relationships, were extremely stimulating and good for the soul. I also learned a good deal."

In each case, the three leaders who reported that they had not benefited from the experience felt insecure or incompetent. Said one, "No, I just worried. I felt very insecure. I didn't feel competent to lead the group. I didn't have the technique or the knowledge."

Eighty-six per cent of the leaders thought they derived some benefits as a leader which the average participant did not. In general they felt they gained more because they worked harder, prepared more carefully, developed more objectivity, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility for the group. Because they read and listened more carefully it was a more insightful experience. In addition, of course, they learned discussion leader techniques which most felt were useful.

Another indication of leader satisfaction with the discussion leadership experience was the fact that forty-one of the fifty leaders said they would be interested in leading another group, while two indicated they might be but were not sure. Of the seven who replied in the negative, five reported lack of time, the other two preferred to be participants. More than half the leaders interviewed did actually lead new groups subsequently.

Interviewers' Evaluation of the Leaders

The interviewers were asked to evaluate each leader interviewed in regard to their estimates of the leader's intelligence, personality, and discussion leadership qualities. These were subjective evaluations, of course, but it should be recalled that in addition to lengthy interviews, each interviewer had observed at least two of the leaders for the three sessions and ten sessions respectively, and had also gotten the reactions to the leader of at least two of the participants in every group.

Their evaluations may be summarized as follows:

			Total	
Qualities	*Past Leaders*	*New Leaders*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
1. Intelligence:				
a. Superior	17	14	31	62
b. Average	7	9	16	32
c. Below Average	1	2	3	6
2. Personality:				
a. Outgoing	20	17	37	74
b. Average	5	7	12	24
c. Shy	1	1	2	4
3. Leadership:				
a. Superior	14	10	24	48
b. Average	11	12	23	46
c. Below Average		3	3	6

Breakdown of the evaluations by program revealed no significant differences. This is interesting in view of the fact that the participants had rated the leaders of the World Politics groups considerably higher than the other groups. It would indicate that the materials and the nature of the subject matter were more compelling factors than the leadership itself. It is also true that there is considerable cross-over in leadership. Leaders lead different groups in successive years. Some of the leaders of the Liberal Arts Programs* (Humanities, World Affairs and Ways of Mankind) had led World Politics groups.

It would appear, then, that the conjecture that the World Politics leadership was better because these groups had two leaders was not well founded. At the time of the study the World Politics program had been in existence more than three years, the others but one. There had been more training institutes and perhaps some of the poorer leaders had been weeded out by the time the study was made. At least three of the directors of World Politics programs do not feel that two leaders generally work better than one. They report that the single leader is apt to do a much more thorough job of preparation and is much less hampered by the consequences of trying to coordinate his efforts with the other leader. He also has an even deeper sense of responsibility. The Western Regional Director of the then American Foundation for Political Education, who has probably had more experience with World Politics groups than any other single person in the country, concurs in the above and goes on to say, "My own feeling, after watching many groups and talking with people who have led and watched many more, is that the only thing that is better than one good leader is possibly two good leaders. But one good leader and one weak one is clearly inferior to just one good one, and frequently a potentially good leader is hampered by the poor one." In view of the economics of the discussion programs and the difficulty of getting good leaders, the desirability of utilizing co-leaders in discussion groups may be seriously questioned.

---

*This is merely a technical designation. These three programs were sponsored by a special Liberal Arts Discussion grant. The World Politics groups were sponsored by the then American Foundation for Political Education.

In view of the fact that the designations utilized in evaluating the leaders (superior, average, and below average) are rather arbitrary and subject to considerable variation, depending upon the personal views and criteria of the individual interviewer, some background on the leaders and examples of comments and evaluations by the interviewers are given below:

Two superior leaders:

(*1*) Even among the leaders rated "superior" there were, of course, gradations. Dr. A is probably one of the four or five best leaders of the fifty interviewed.

He is a medical doctor, aged sixty, who was born and educated in Germany but who has lived in the Los Angeles area for thirty-four years. He had never been in a discussion group before. He reads very widely. Aside from his medical reading, the last three books he read were Linton's *Tree of Culture, Modern Concepts of Physics,* and St. John Ervine's *George Bernard Shaw.* He reads three or four books a month. His fields of reading interest include science and mathematics, social science, philosophy, and literature. He reads regularly: *The New Republic, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Scientific American, The Reporter,* and the *U.N. Review.* His other leisure time activities include mountaineering, badminton, skiing and social activities. He also plays chess fairly regularly.

Dr. A had led a group in the Humanities. He was prompted to become a leader because he likes discussion and was interested in the subject matter. He thought his discussion group was successful. The participants felt that they had "gotten a great deal out of the discussions. They developed interests they hadn't had before; particularly in painting, poetry and architecture." He felt the strongest point was the high degree of interest and the weakest point the fact that some of the members did not read the materials and others didn't read them thoroughly.

Did he feel that he benefited from the experience? "Yes, definitely! I became better acquainted with areas of information I hadn't known too well. The social contacts with the members were rewarding. I enjoyed and profited from the stimulation of the give and take and, very importantly, I learned self-discipline, to listen to others." He felt as a leader he derived special benefit in that the discussion program is a "more insightful experience for the leader."

In general, he felt the participants developed an ability to digest new knowledge, learned to listen to other people, got new insights and learned to discuss relevantly. He thought there was an increase in understanding and tolerance of other points of view.

Asked what he would have done differently, he answered, "Given the subject matter, I would have stressed even more strongly at the outset the importance of their doing the reading." As for being "more" or "less" directive, he said, "I would have liked to have been less directive but it wasn't possible, the discussion would have suffered."

Interviewer's comment:

> "This leader is a mature, highly cultivated person. He is not only very widely read, but has assimilated and integrated his reading. He is analytical and perceptive and very likely guided his group so as to get at basic issues and at the core of the matters they were discussing. He apparently experienced a great deal of satisfaction from leading the group. He felt he was doing something which he considers to be highly important — stimulating interest, thinking, and discussion of ideas. He also gained some new insights himself, both into the materials discussed and the attitudes and thinking of others."

The interviewer rated him "unquestionably superior" intellectually, of an "outgoing and sympathetic" personality, and highly superior as a leader.

> "He strikes me as precisely the sort of person who should lead discussion groups. He is a distinctly superior person of broad cultivation and interests as well as strong enthusiasm for the program. The two participants in his group who were interviewed could not praise him enough. They thought him enormously stimulating and provocative. And contrary to his feeling that he had been of necessity somewhat controlling, the only criticism both participants had to make of him was that he did not participate in the discussion enough himself. One said, 'He had so much more to offer than any of the rest of us, I would much rather have listened to him.' The other said, 'I would

enroll in any group Dr. A would lead. I have never had so interesting or stimulating an experience.' "

(*2*) This second example of a superior leader is presented because he had never been to college and had completed but the eleventh grade in high school. It will be recalled that of the fifty leaders interviewed, forty-one were college graduates, many with graduate degrees as well. Of the nine non-college graduates, five were rated superior by the interviewers. Three were rated average and one below average. Typically, leaders in the discussion programs are college graduates and the majority tend to be in the professions. When a non-college graduate is selected or accepted as a leader, he tends to be exceptional to begin with. And approximately the same proportion among them (5 out of 9 in this case) tend to be superior leaders as among the college graduates (19 out of 41 in this study).

Mr. B is thirty-nine, had eleven years of formal schooling, and is engaged in certain aspects of advertising and public relations. Before becoming a leader of a World Politics group, he had been a participant in one. He reads about a book and a half a month. The last three books he reported reading were Spectorsky's *The Ex-Urbanites,* Drexter's *The Architecture of Japan,* and G. R. Taylor's *Sex in History.* The books he likes best are "biographical, political, historical and sociological." He regularly reads *The Manchester Guardian, Life, Fortune, The New Yorker, Harper's, Atlantic* and *Sunset* – aside from a number of professional magazines. He occasionally reads *Punch, L'Illustration,* and a number of other French and British magazines. In his leisure time he goes to the movies – usually foreign films – gardens, and visits with friends.

Mr. B had never been a discussion leader before. He became enthusiastic about the discussion programs as a result of his participation in a World Politics group.

He thought his discussion group was "extremely successful, because we had the most interesting cross-section of people. The discussion was technically successful, especially among some women who had no interest in world politics but who blossomed out in the discussion and became intensely interested. We had one extreme right-winger and at the other extreme a writer for *The People's World.*

"The weakest point was the tendency of the best-qualified people not to read the basic material. They tended to disguise their lack of preparation by using their skill to make speeches."

Mr. B felt he benefited from the experience as discussion leader "very, very much. I had no background at all in political science. This afforded me the first controlled glimpse I'd ever had into political history in a situation in which I had to prepare more thoroughly as a leader than I had to before as a participant.

"From the discussion group the participants got a historical framework for current politics. In some cases they got an increased confidence in their ability to present their views because to some extent they were protected from the garrulousness of people who had dominated discussion around the dinner table. Furthermore, they increased their knowledge of the subject matter and there was a very definite increase in understanding and tolerance of other points of view."

Did people who participated little at the outset increase their participation at successive meetings?

"Absolutely! This was marked."

Were participants able to express themselves more clearly and logically as the program went on?

"Oh, certainly. They became more relaxed and recognized that they would receive a fair hearing. They gained confidence, thought through their positions more carefully and formulated their ideas better.

"I think they read a good deal more. It's hard to gauge how much, but they were obviously looking things up in the encyclopedia and in reference books."

Were people in the group trying to understand each other or were they most concerned with expressing their own views?

"I'm sure almost all were interested in expressing their own views. They were interested in the body of the material and in learning from it, but I'd be loath to agree that a primary consideration was understanding others' viewpoints."

Asked whether he thought he should have been more or less directive as a leader, he replied, "I think I did just right." (The interviewer interjected here: "He did, by God, there was nothing but praise from the participants.")

He added that one thing he should have done was to do more peripheral reading on the historical background of some of the issues discussed.

Interviewer's comment:

What do you think the leader got out of the experience?

"I would guess an additional measure of self-confidence. I have a feeling he may have felt some inadequacy in terms of his training, in the face of some presumably high-powered people. His very evident success in running the group, with such a wide range of views, must have communicated to him a notion (wholly correct) that they were after all no more intelligent or better educated than he."

The interviewer found Mr. B "extraordinarily gifted intellectually, and likewise in terms of personal maturity. He was outgoing and sympathetic in personality."

In general how does he strike you?

"An impressive person even assuming he were an honor graduate in college. With his eleventh-grade education, even more impressive because he lacked the defensiveness or insecurity that one might expect from such a person, no matter what his present social status, in talking to an egg-head interviewer. One of the three or four most delightful people, out of our 30, I've yet interviewed. He doubtless has his faults and failings but I wish I could assume that university-trained people have as few as he does. A remarkable person — in part because he makes no apparent effort to seem remarkable."

An Average Leader

Mrs. C is married, aged forty-two and a college graduate. Her major was psychology. Her husband is a research engineer. They have lived in the community five years. She is somewhat active in communal affairs. She had been in discussion groups before: several Great Books groups, Jefferson, and Economic Reasoning. (The latter two are Liberal Arts programs developed by The Fund for Adult Education.) She reads from two to four books a month. The last four books she had read were: Dostoyevski's *The Brothers Karamazov,* Sherwood Eddy's *Autobiography,* Plato's *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus.* She regularly reads *The Reporter, Time, National Geographic, Life,* and *Today's Health.* Occasionally she reads *Harper's* and *The Saturday Review.*

Her other leisure-time activities include listening to music and playing the piano, social conversation and dancing. As a new leader, Mrs. C was interviewed twice, before and after the program. The following was elicited at the first interview.

She had enrolled as a participant in her first Liberal Arts discussion group because, "I had learned so much from the Great Books groups I was in, that I thought maybe I would learn as much here. I still love the Great Books discussions and of all my activities that is the last one I would drop. I wanted to learn more in those areas offered by the Liberal Arts program also. Then, too, I enjoy the social aspects of these groups. We have learned to know some wonderful people that in the normal course of events we probably never would have met."

They had rotating leaders in this group. While it might have been useful to the individuals leading, Mrs. C felt that on the whole the group suffered from the weak leaders and she would not recommend the rotation of leadership among members of the group.

Mrs. C had been a Great Books leader and also attended a week-end leader-training institute for the Liberal Arts program. In addition, she had received further training specifically for the World Politics program.

Asked about her reasons for becoming a discussion leader and her attitudes and concerns regarding it, Mrs. C replied:

"I was asked to become a discussion leader. I would rather be just a participant but just the same I am looking forward to it."

She thought she would benefit from it. "You always learn a lot more. You learn the material better because you study more as the leader. You also learn about leading discussions."

She did not anticipate any difficulties in leading the World Politics group because, "I have done similar things before. But I know that I have a lot to learn."

Mrs. C thought that one of the major purposes of the discussion groups was to increase the ability of participants to make critical judgments. "In particular, judgments about all the things citizens in a democracy have to know about. I also think they gain a lot of knowledge and personal enrichment that isn't particularly tied to anything but themselves."

When asked what criteria she would use to judge the success of the group: "Well, if they are stimulated and challenged so that they have had a new door or field opened to them. Or, if they say that they have never thought of something that way before. Best of all if they have felt so disturbed that they had a hard time sleeping at night afterward. I think it's good to feel intellectually disturbed. We tend to be too complacent about our ideas and prejudices."

Interviewer's comment at end of first interview:

The interviewer rated her as being "very well educated" but qualified it by saying, "She really fits somewhere between being very well educated and fairly well educated. She has wide interests in new knowledge and an interest and capacity for handling subtle and difficult concepts and ideas.

"She is very well informed, reads widely in a variety of areas and displayed considerable breadth of information. (These judgments depend, of course, so much on what internal standard one is using.) She definitely appeared to be open-minded – in fact, eagerly seeking new ideas. She appeared to have no feeling of strain out of the interview discussions but seemed rather to find them exhilarating.

"I would guess that she is genuinely identified with the groups and knows that leadership is necessary. She appears to take to the leadership quite easily and probably enjoys the stimulation. There was little evidence that she had strong status or other needs driving her toward such leadership.

"As for Mrs. C's personality, she seemed to be quite relaxed and emotionally well balanced. She was very free and open during the interview and showed no concern whatsoever about it. She has well-developed social skills. One might say that she is more of a 'functional' sort of person who fits into situations well and who subordinates herself to the group needs, than a 'strong' or 'striking' type of person who exercises a great deal of dominance and who has strong individualistic-type influence on others. But within this personality style she appeared to have a great deal of self-confidence."

Second interview:

At the end of the program, Mrs. C was interviewed again. Asked whether she thought her discussion group was successful and if so, why, she replied:

"I thought it went quite well. The group was a little stiff. Over the course of the meetings they should have gotten a little bit freer than they did. I think this was because people hadn't done the reading the way they should have. But basically I think it was because there were so many divergent points of view that the more timid ones at either extreme were afraid to express themselves for fear of getting scorched."

What were its strong points?

"The opportunity to think together about these very important questions in international relations. Everyone was there with the idea of finding a way to think through these tangled problems. They said many times that their purpose was to become better informed so that they would know what to do. In this sense I am sure they had a satisfying experience. When they came up against these problems they would say, 'That's why we're here.' In varying degrees, of course, they got this information and a chance to work on the problems."

Its weakest points?

"Lack of real content grounding. A widely-travelled woman in the group was very critical of the program in this respect. She felt that the leaders, if they were not specialists in world politics, should at least have gone through long, intensive training in content before leading these sessions. My co-leader was offended at this and didn't feel that she knew what she was talking about. But I sort of have to agree with her. That is, I know that I would have been a much better leader if I had known more, and I studied these readings very hard. This is a recommendation that I would make, that at the very least the leaders should have taken the programs they lead, as a participant, before leading them. I want to lead a World Politics group again next year and I am sure I can do a much better job. You need to know the over-all course before you can handle the separate pieces well. There are always a certain number of people in our groups who are concerned about this content information business — maybe more than we think.

"In addition, it was hard to get the members of the group to talk in terms of facts and not opinions so much. This meant that the discussion didn't get down to the real meat in the readings as much as it should have." (What do you mean by facts?) "Well, there was a tendency to deal in generalities and opinions. Many times you had to get down to the facts of the issue before you could really discuss the matter intelligently.

"But I am sure the members felt it was worth while. The attendance held up very well. A couple in Santa Ana had a baby but even came back afterward, all that way, because they didn't want to drop the discussion group."

Do you feel you benefited from this experience?

"Tremendously! First of all, just the chance to study the points of view of these outstanding people, to have the basic readings and the State Department documents all conveniently together where you could study them. The second great benefit was the experience in leading a discussion group. I feel I grew very much personally, in my ability to handle a group."

Do you think you derived any benefits as a leader of the discussion group which the average participant didn't get?

"Yes, definitely! I enjoy being a participant much more than leading. But being responsible for the group forces the kind of growth I mentioned. I participated in Great Books discussions for five years and in several Liberal Arts Center programs, but I never experienced the same growth. It is a very humbling experience."

What in general do you think the participants got out of it?

"The same thing I did but to a lesser degree: the opportunity to express and exchange opinions. The leaders, of course, didn't get the chance to express their opinions that the members did. . . . Many developed a better ability to make judgments about the issues discussed. I don't see how anyone could do even half these readings without becoming much more capable in this area than before."

Was there evidence of an increase in understanding and tolerance of other points of view?

"No, I don't really think so. Maybe they did, but I didn't get any real evidence of it. . . . We really had violent arguments at times, and some of the members were really quite intolerant. But I will say this, they almost always stayed friendly personally despite this. This is as far as the discussion was concerned. I do feel that the readings definitely increased their tolerance."

Mrs. C reported further that a member who participated little at the outset participated in the discussions increasingly at successive meetings. Almost all increased their ability to express themselves more clearly and logically as the program went on.

She did not believe there was an increase in reading during the program aside from the program materials themselves, the readings taking all the spare time they had.

Participants told her at the end of the program that they had gained a great deal from the series.

Asked what she would do differently if she were to lead another group, Mrs. C replied:

"Probably a lot of things differently. I have been very critical of myself in this process. But I am not sure just what I would do differently. It would depend so much on the nature of the group. I always made plans and studied hard and I would continue to do that. Our first organizing session went fine. The first real discussion was stiff, as I said."

As for being *more* or *less* directive, "I think I would be about the same. My co-leader was more directive. I don't like to chop off a discussion when it's going well and go on to something else. I don't like to express my views or ask leading questions that give it away. I felt he did that and neither I nor the group knew how to handle the reactions that followed."

If a friend of yours were to ask your advice as to whether to enroll in the program, what would you tell him?

"I'd tell him 'Yes!' A very enthusiastic 'Yes.' I would tell him it would result in personal growth. He would get more information, more ability to think clearly. He would find the social part enjoyable and fun."

Mrs. C concluded by indicating that she would like to lead a World Politics group again.

Interviewer's comments:

What do you think the leader got out of the experience?

"She found the experience a humbling and somewhat chastening experience. Before leading, because of her Great Books and other background, she felt very confident of her ability. At the end she was much more aware of possible subtleties and complexities. But this seemed to challenge her to try again to prove her ability rather than to discourage or defeat her. I think she is a good deal more sophisticated about people than she was before, when she knew all the clichés but in a somewhat superficial way. Apparently she was also very stimulated by the material itself and learned a great deal about the topic under discussion."

The interviewer rated her superior intellectually in terms of the general population but not superior in comparison to the other leaders who were interviewed. As a personality, the interviewer described her as being outgoing and sympathetic. He rated her average as a discussion leader.

The interviewer concluded, "She verbalizes extremely well and thinks a great deal about these matters. But she is not nearly as perceptive and skilled in dealing with actual people and situations as she thinks she is. She even yet seems only partially aware of the reasons for the problems in the group she had – the stiffness of the group, which was made up of a mixture of extreme mutual hostility and fear, etc. Her evaluation of Mrs. I (in the course of the interview the leader was asked to comment on two participants whom the interviewer had interviewed) and her failure to pick up or improve the rather marked lack of social skill and competence that was so obvious, is rather surprising.

"But she is resilient, probably partly because of her insensitivity at a subtle level, and by representing a somewhat frightening personal challenge, this group was a leavening experience for her. I would judge that she has real capacity for growth, although she will always tend to overestimate her abilities."

A Below-Average Leader

Mrs. D is married and forty years old. Her husband is president of a small manufacturing company. She attended college for two years and a school of fine arts for several years. She led a World Affairs discussion group. Mrs. D is very active in community activities. She is president of a prestigious woman's organization, a member of the P.T.A. board of directors for seven years, and belongs to the United Nations Association, the League of Women Voters, the Art Alliance and the Young Republicans' Club. She also teaches Sunday School and is a Cub Scout den mother.

Mrs. D had been in six of the Liberal Arts discussion groups, including World Affairs, as a participant. This was the first group she had ever led. She had received no discussion leadership training. At the time she was interviewed, she was participating in an Economic Reasoning discussion group.

She reads approximately one book a month. The books she likes best are "history or factual books"; science, and religious books like *Peace of Mind.* The last three books she had read were: Ilg and Ames, *Child Behaviour;* Henry Dreyfuss, *Designing for People;* Harry A. Overstreet, *The Mature Mind.* She reads the following magazines regularly: *Life, U.S. News and World Report, Time, House Beautiful,* and *The New Yorker.* On occasion she reads *The Ladies' Home Journal, Harper's,* and *Vogue.* She spends two to three hours a week watching television; Disneyland (with the children) and Ozzie and Harriet regularly. Other ways in which she spends her leisure time: sewing, gardening, skiing, sailing and making things around the house (fences, tile-work, etc.), social engagements and dancing.

Mrs. D thought her discussion group was successful. "I think everybody enjoyed it. We've met two or three times since, having dinners together. The fact that the group is interested in getting into another discussion group is an indication of their satisfaction with the last group. Time is the limiting factor, however. Once a week got to be too often."

What were its strongest points?

"I think the rotating leadership is the best thing about it. Also the fact that we learned the background of a lot of things that are happening now – especially in China. I liked the Reader's Digest-size materials, which could be kept handy and read in spare moments."

What were its weakest points?

"To try to cover a whole country in one night is too much. We felt we should have at least two sessions on a country."

Do you feel you benefited from the experience?

"Yes, you get the reasons for why things happened rather than merely learning what happened. I had never formed my own opinions, having taken them from my parents, but now I know what I think or at least I think I do."

A special benefit she felt she got as leader that the average participant didn't get, was the fact that "as leader you have to learn to get other people to talk, which is hard after you have come to like to talk."

What in general do you think the participants got out of it?

"All kinds of things: a chance to talk about things they considered important. Most important, they find that there are many ways to see every question."

Was there evidence of an increase in understanding and tolerance of other points of view?

"Sometimes. The people who take this sort of thing are apt to be interested in others' viewpoints. But at times remarkable differences are expressed, listened to, and at least understood."

Mrs. D reported that some of the members who participated very little at the outset took part increasingly in the discussions at later meetings. Many also began to express themselves more clearly and logically. In answer to the question of increased reading on the part of participants, she replied:

"Time is the great enemy. We asked people to read supplementary materials, which they often did. One person said he planned to subscribe to three different papers. There was terrific awareness; where can you find unbiased, true reporting of facts? My husband, a member of the group, now does read other things than mystery stories. He has developed a preference for current best sellers."

Mrs. D thought there was evidence to indicate greater community activity by participants as a result of the discussions. "I think I see evidences that I can trace back to the discussion groups in almost all other activities. . . . One person joined the League of Women Voters, another became active in the Freedom Agenda. At the same time we've all been aware of those extreme right-wingers who have done everything possible to dampen the spirits of those interested in these groups."

In this group, Mrs. D reported, half the participants were "conservative" and the other half are "middle-of-the-roaders." There were no "liberals" in the group.

Did any sharp conflicts in ideas occur? "Yes, on the subject of free trade. Even though we could accept it as a principle of world-wide applicability, one man was in steel and another in the pump business. Both said they would not like it if they had to take it on the chin. There was strong disagreement on whether it would really work. We also discussed aid for foreign nations. The discussion on this was perhaps hotter than on anything else. We all ended up agreeing that we were opposed to giving things . . . we shouldn't put them in the position where we expect them to be grateful. . . . We were all a very friendly group. We never got mad, even though people were firm in expressing their opinions."

Were people in the group trying to understand each other or were they most concerned with expressing their own views?

"They were most concerned with trying to learn something. I suppose everyone is more interested in expressing his own point of view but every now and then someone came up with a different point of view, and its validity and logic were appreciated by others in the group."

Thinking back, what would you have done differently as a leader? Would you be more or less directive?

"I think the only thing you have to be firm about is to keep people from talking off the subject and to keep more than one person from talking at the same time. Some people want more factual material out of a leader; the only technique I've discovered is to ask questions."

Emphasize certain things? "I don't suppose I was a typical leader.

I tended to make announcements, get the ball rolling, and then let the thing run itself."

Anything else you would do differently? "Have every person bring – on a slip of paper – a question they would like to discuss that evening. The biggest drawback of the group was the tendency of people to drop out – our group got too small."

Mrs. D thought there was some advantage in rotating the leadership among the members, feeling that after having the experience of leading they tended to become better participants. On the other hand, she knew that some members didn't like it because it weakened the discussion.

"I definitely recommended it, but I knew a lot of people who would feel more enthusiastic about joining a group if the leader were well-versed in the subject. On the whole, I'd rather be in this latter kind of group now – after having been in so many discussion groups."

In general, Mrs. D found the World Affairs materials satisfactory although many of the members felt the materials were out of date. She suggested that the materials might be improved by reducing their coverage and providing more time to discuss the different countries.

As to whether she would recommend the discussion program to a friend, she answered that she had already recommended it to many people.

Interviewer's comment:

In regard to what he thought Mrs. D got out of the experience: "Mainly a sense of having agreeably performed a public duty. I would guess she might also have increased a pre-existing sympathy for people in other lands, but am dubious as to whether she may have got much new knowledge. She probably also improved her ability to draw people out in a discussion, in her activities elsewhere."

Intellectually, the interviewer rated Mrs. D as below average. "I can recall only one other well-educated person with whom I have had a harder time communicating, not from lack of mutual liking, but because she is almost incapable of giving a direct response to a question."

He described Mrs. D as "outgoing and sympathetic. She makes one readily feel at ease."

As a discussion leader, the interviewer rated her "below average."

"In general," the interviewer concluded, "Mrs. D is a very pleasant and sensitive person with a high degree of social responsibility and some considerable but very generalized political sophistication. But she completely lacks a trained mind. I picture her as being of a decidedly artistic turn, misplaced in community activities because of her sense of social obligation — which in turn is down-to-earth, but I'd guess sometimes as baffling to her associates as she was to me."

From the four case descriptions above it is apparent that a number of factors and qualities go into the making of a good leader. These include a high degree of intelligence, an extremely broad and cultivated background, an outgoing, sympathetic personality, a keen and analytical mind, a high degree of self-confidence, and a willingness and ability to be directive and even controlling if necessary. Throughout the study it became very apparent that both because of the leadership training and some of the underlying conceptions of the program itself, there was a great tendency to get discussion at any cost. The underlying belief seemed to be implicit that somehow discussion at any price is good: that the more people you get talking, the better the discussion group. Educationally, this can hardly be accepted. The relevance of what is said, the content of what is said, the direction it takes, the kinds of insights that are gained, the stimulus to thinking and further reading, these are the important aspects of the discussion. For these to take place, however, a high degree of leadership is necessary.

This still does not mean that the leader must function as a teacher. He must, however, have some qualities of a teacher — a degree of competence in the subject matter and a sense of direction, as well as being stimulating and provocative. He must be skillful in raising issues and questions which serve to enlighten and to bring the discussion along in a constructive manner. Dr. A, the leader rated most highly of the four discussed above, had all of these qualities. He is a man of great cultivation, broad interests and wide reading. He has a keen, analytical and rather tough mind. He adapted his role to the nature of the group itself. It is clear that all groups cannot be led in the same way. The composition of the group itself is extremely important. A less-informed or average group requires more direction. A well-informed, articulate group requires less direction and control.

Perhaps a mistake in leadership training institutes has been the notion that the same criteria of leadership are to be used for all groups. This, obviously, should not be the case. Dr. A did not play the role of a teacher. As reported above, a number of the participants wished that he would have projected himself even more into the discussion. They would have liked to have listened to him lecture. He carefully refrained from this, however. On the other hand, he did not permit irrelevant discussion or personal reminiscences which had no bearing on the issues being discussed. If alternative interpretations or points of view were not expressed in the group, he himself raised them, so that the group got a broad picture of the issues involved and became aware of points of view or attitudes which none of the members of the group had themselves expressed. This is enormously important in a discussion program. The fact that 15 to 20 people get together for discussion does not guarantee a wide presentation of different points of view. On the contrary, the way these groups are organized, the areas in which they are organized, the fact that they are upper socio-economic groups, all tend to guarantee that, more often than not, there will not be radical divergences of attitude and differences in point of view. The leader must, therefore, play the role of presenting other points of view, or by questioning, see to it that they are presented, if the full objectives and goals of the program are to be achieved. To do this, however, requires broader background than many leaders have. To some degree, the materials themselves may provide considerable background information, as in World Politics. But for a large percentage of leaders this is not enough.

In the case of Mr. B, the second superior leader described, we have evidence of the fact that it is not schooling alone that produces the kind of leadership that is required for these discussion groups. Mr. B had not even graduated from high school. But he has many of the qualities of Dr. A. He has broad intellectual interests. He reads widely and has a stimulating, provocative type of mind. He also pursued a somewhat more directive role than the average leader. Even in this case, however, the reason that he was not rated as high as Dr. A is the fact that, though well-informed, he did not have the depth of knowledge needed for the subjects being discussed. He himself expressed the feeling that he wished he had done more related reading. And no doubt he was right.

In the case of Mrs. C, we have a well-schooled person who reads widely and has had a considerable amount of experience, both in the Great Books programs and in other liberal arts programs. Notably lacking, however, were skill, maturity, and the ability to relate to people, really to perceive and understand what was going on in her group. She was not able to overcome the stiffness in her group or to get the group working as a coherent, cohesive body in a constructive way. In her case, too, the lack of grounding in content was an obstacle to effective leadership. When she points to the fact that she found it difficult to get the members to talk and discuss in terms of factual information and not opinions, this was probably due not only to lack of adequate skill on her part, but also to lack of sufficient information to demonstrate the relevance of the facts or to provide them when needed. Mrs. C indicated that if she were to do a program again she would be neither more nor less directive, but about the same. Actually, her group probably required more direction, but she was not competent to give it.

While Mrs. D was not typical of the leadership, there only being six leaders who were rated as being below average, she is an example of the kind of person whom directors are tempted to invite as leaders but who should probably be avoided. Mrs. D was undoubtedly selected because she plays an important social role in her community. She is very active in community affairs and moves in a social group regarded as the elite in her community. Although she is a very nice person and has had a good deal of formal education, she is really not interested in ideas. Although a number of prominent people in the community joined the group because she was the leader and they all knew her personally, the long-time success of the program is not well served by such leadership, because the members of the group, due in large part to her poor leadership, did not find the discussions very worthwhile. She indicated that she felt that she herself did not know enough about the subjects being discussed. In that, she was indubitably right. Utilizing such leadership does incalculable harm to the program. It makes it a pleasant social kind of experience devoid of intellectual content and meat. If these programs are to be successful, they must be real intellectual experiences. They must make demands on people, require some degree of concentrated reading by the participants, who then must be made to think hard and cogently at the discussions. Mrs. D was obviously not the kind of leader who could achieve this.

While 62 per cent of all the leaders interviewed were rated as intellectually superior, and 74 per cent were rated as being outgoing and sympathetic personalities, only 48 per cent were rated as being superior leaders. In terms of the objectives of the program, one may well wonder whether any but superior leaders ought to be used. In many ways a successful discussion is more difficult to achieve than securing a good lecturer. The traditional prejudice against discussions or learning experiences which do not have present an acknowledged authority make it all the more important to get excellent discussion leaders. Now this probably means that the directors of such programs cannot rely upon former participants as the source for their leaders. The kind of people who enroll in the discussion groups are not necessarily the kind of people who will make the best leaders. What becomes clear, however, is that the selection of leaders is extremely important. It is only those persons of superior intellectual abilities, of broad reading and background, keen and insightful minds, skillful in working with and drawing out people, who should be used as leaders.

Part Five

OBSERVATION OF MEETINGS

OBSERVATION OF MEETINGS

As mentioned in the introduction, each of the interviewers observed two groups. The interviewers attended every meeting of one group, and the first, middle and last meeting of a second group. A total of eight groups were observed, two in World Politics, two in Ways of Mankind, two in World Affairs, and two in An Introduction to the Humanities.

Organization and Orientation

For the most part, the observers found the first meetings handled fairly efficiently. In all but one case, the necessary materials and texts were available, and the audio-visual aids were there on time and were efficiently operated. At some of the subsequent meetings, however, where visual aids were used, difficulties arose. In several instances, films or equipment did not arrive on time, and in at least three instances the projector broke down, with considerable loss of time.

As for proper orientation of the participants at the first meeting in regard to the purposes and procedure of the study group, there was considerable variation. The best orientation was provided in two groups by the area director. He introduced the discussion leader, indicated what role he was to play, explained what was expected of the participants, and gave a general over-view of the nature and purpose of the program. Where the leaders themselves did the orientation, they were not quite as effective. In two groups the leaders read a statement about the nature and purpose of the program, as well as the leader's role. In one of these two instances, the reading was stilted. It would have been much better if he had spoken extemporaneously. In the second instance, the leader concentrated hard on reading some general instructions as to how the group should work, the purposes of the discussion, and so on. She spoke in a low voice and so rapidly that it is doubtful whether more than five to eight people heard her distinctly, and whether that many understood her. In another group, the leader did not say too much about the purposes except in a general way. No clear idea was given the participants as to what they might expect to get from the experience. On the other hand, he described the procedures and operating philosophy quite well. In another group the leader tried hard, but spoke too fast and was not quite as lucid as she might have been. Questions kept coming up about the purpose of the course and what it would cover. They all were answered patiently, but not quite as skillfully as might have been desired. A film was then shown, entitled, "How to Lead a Discussion." The discussion following the film was the only really poor discussion in this group that the observer witnessed. The leader had the group parrot back the points in the movie, and lost the chance to demonstrate how a discussion might work. But there was no evidence that this disturbed the group at this early stage.

Perhaps too little thought has been given to the importance of the first orientation meeting. It is at this meeting that the whole tone of the group is set. It is here that misconceptions as to the nature and purpose of the group may be corrected. It is also the occasion when valid expectations and the true purposes of the discussion program may be clarified. There is little question but that many persons enrolling in the discussion groups are not entirely clear as to their method of operation and their purposes. Many do not even realize that the groups are primarily discussion groups. Some enrollees come expecting to find subject-matter experts, particularly when the groups are sponsored by universities or colleges. In quite a number of instances, participants are disappointed to find that university professors are not leading the groups. It is therefore doubly important that the entire structure, method, and purpose be clearly explained at this first meeting. At the other extreme, there are those who will come feeling that because it is a discussion group and the method is informal they do not have to work at it. They do not take the reading seriously, nor do they prepare adequately in advance of the meetings. It is at the first meeting that emphasis should be placed upon the importance of doing all the assigned reading and, if possible, supplementary readings if members are to get very much out of the program. In view of the reactions of the participants and the comments of the leaders as to the role of the leader in the group, it may also be questioned as to whether at the first meeting it is desirable to describe precisely what the role of the leader is to be. Actually, this cannot be known at the first meeting, if the leader is truly to perform an effective role. As indicated in previous discussions here, the role of the leader should probably vary, depending upon the composition of the group, and to some degree upon the nature of the materials and the subject matter. There is no question in the writer's mind but that the leader must adapt his role to the composition of the group. In some groups he will have to be fairly directive. In others this will not be necessary. But certainly the leader will not know this at the very first meeting.

Participation in the Discussions

In most of the groups, and at most of the meetings, from approximately one-third to one-half of the participants participated fairly regularly. Others participated only intermittently. There were, of course, one or two groups where as many as 80 per cent of the group participated quite regularly. There were wide variations, however, from group to group and even from meeting to meeting within groups.

As to the relevance of the contributions made by the participants, this, too, varied considerably. In four of the eight groups the observers reported that the contributions were quite relevant. These also tended to be the better groups in terms of composition and leadership. Of the four latter groups, three of the observers reported that there was much less tendency to go off on tangents at the later meetings than at the earlier ones.

As to whether the discussion of particular issues at each meeting progressed, or whether they tended to revolve about the first points of view expressed, again there was considerable variation between groups. In two or three of the groups, the observers remarked that there was excellent progression in terms of developing ideas to their logical conclusion, examining different points of view and alternative approaches, and then going on to the next point suggested by the previous discussion. In other groups, however, there was only a fair progression of ideas. Said one observer:

> "This was not so much that the first points of view stayed dominant, but that there was succession of topics with little relation to one another. In my opinion this was largely because the rotating leaders define their function almost entirely in terms of just getting discussion, and not in developing a progression of thought. They seemed to plan their strategy

largely on the fear that no one would talk, which was never the slightest problem in this group."

Again we see pointed up the importance of stressing in the leadership training the significance of the substantive aspects of the discussion. In too many instances the leaders were primarily concerned with getting participation at any cost, regardless of the quality or level of the discussion. Apparently, not enough emphasis is placed, in the leadership training, on getting progression of ideas and the development of ideas in the discussion and on getting a high level of discussion qualitatively and in terms of documentation of ideas.

Development of Critical Thinking and Open-Mindedness

All the observers pointed out the difficulty of attempting to estimate any increase or development in the ability of the group or its members to analyze problems and to think more critically. This is difficult enough to do in controlled experimentation; it is well-nigh impossible to judge in the course of observing people about whom the observer has very little information in terms of their backgrounds and their critical capacities to begin with. In three of the eight groups, however, the observers felt that there was some progress in this regard.

A recent doctoral study by Hadlock of participants in World Politics groups in the same program concluded that a statistically significant increase in the ability to think critically does result from participation in these discussion groups.* The author pre-tested and post-tested members of six discussion groups using an outside group of adults of comparable age and background as a control group. Difference in age was not a significant factor, but those who had the greatest amount of education scored a significantly greater increase in critical thinking than those who had the least amount of education.

With regard to the development of open-mindedness, the observers felt somewhat more certain. Several pointed out that the groups they observed seemed to be quite open-minded to begin with, but it is not without significance that in five of the eight groups the observers reported, between earlier and later meetings, there were definite indications of greater open-mindedness on the part of members toward views different from their own. Commented one observer:

> "This group was quite open-minded and willing to listen to different points of view at the outset, but the members got a lot of practice in listening to others, and it was evident that they were continually surprised at the diversity of viewpoints on almost any issue. Under the

---

*Hadlock, Alton P., *A Study of the Development of Critical Thinking Through Adult Discussion Groups.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles, 1958.

> circumstances, there was inevitably some development of open-mindedness. On the basis of interviews and other content courses, it is obvious that content has a lot to do with the development of open-mindedness. This course content (Humanities) was so 'safe' as compared with World Politics, for example, that there were few deep emotions involved. The more controversial subjects are much harder to handle, but the very controversy offers greater opportunity, in my opinion, for the development of open-mindedness. I think this group would have developed more in this respect if they had been forced to do so by the discussion."

In almost every group observed there were instances of participants who had modified previously-held views considerably. In a few cases there were complete reversals of position or opinion.

The Leadership

In only two of the eight groups did the observers report that the leader played a positive role in the group, that he guided it, without dominating, yet kept the discussion relevant and helped it to progress. In two other groups the observers said that this was done occasionally but not all the time. In the remaining four groups the observers reported that the leader did not play a positive role, nor did he keep the discussion relevant and help it progress.

The observers reported that about half the leaders made conscious efforts to involve as many people as possible in the discussions. In the remaining half this was not done especially. In two of the eight groups, rotating leaders from among the participants were used. Of one of these groups the observer remarked, in regard to the matter of involving the participants:

> "Most of the sessions, under the rotation system, were led by the members. Rarely did any leader try to control talkative ones and draw out shy ones. Fortunately for the group, there was really only one exceptionally talkative member. Some of those who participated very little, I felt, were quite susceptible to being drawn out, and this could have been done, but was not. However, as nearly as this can be judged externally, they appeared to remain very participative in terms of mentally following the discussions."

Throughout this report the writer has pointed up, and perhaps been somewhat critical of, the tendency on the part of leaders, no doubt influenced by the training they had received, to get participation at all costs. Lest this criticism be over-emphasized, it should not be thought that securing as wide participation as possible is not desirable. It is extremely desirable, because for many people it is not until they actually attempt to verbalize their thoughts that they really begin to evaluate their own ideas and to think critically and objectively. What is criticized, however, is the notion that discussion or participation is somehow desirable for its own sake, regardless of the level or content of the discussion. Participation is important, but the relevance of the contributions, the progression that occurs in the course of the discussion, the provision for consideration of differing points of view, the depth of the discussion, all these are important, too. Most important, discussion is a means of getting at ideas, not an end in itself.

The influence of the training the leaders receive is again apparent in the fact that in no instance did an observer report that any leader talked too much, controlled the discussion too much, or assumed the role of an authority. Again, as stated previously, they tended to go to the other extreme. Even in situations where the leader had considerable competence and the group wanted to hear from him, the leader tended to bend over backwards not to intrude in the discussions. The reader will recall the situation of the doctor referred to in a previous section. He was one of the most outstanding leaders and had a great contribution to make, but he consciously refrained from doing so because he had been given to understand that his role was to be a fairly neutral one. In that situation, the participants were perfectly well aware of how much they could get from him, were very eager to hear from him, and felt rather frustrated when he restrained himself to so great a degree. It simply makes no sense to have a rich resource in a group and not utilize it. Of course it is understandable that the organizers of these programs, sensitive to the criticism being levelled at a program using lay leadership, one which does not use experts, were very cautious in training leaders who basically do not have enough substantive information. But again, just as the leader's role should not be the same for all groups and depends on the composition of the group, similarly instruction to leaders must be different depending upon the caliber of the leader. Where a leader has a contribution to make, he must be permitted to do so. This need not mean that he becomes a lecturer or teacher. In a sense, while it is not possible to give individual leadership training to every leader, in addition to the general training of leaders in a group, the director or organizer of the entire program of discussion groups should probably meet individually with each leader, and after assessing his background and resources in terms of the particular subject matter of the group he will lead, give him more direct individual advice and guidance as to how to conduct his group.

On another important score, the leadership according to the observers was quite weak. This was in providing and making certain that alternative points of view or positions on particular problems, not mentioned by any of the participants, be raised and given consideration. In only two of the groups was this done in a very affirmative and conscious way. In a third group this was sometimes done. But in the other five groups it was rarely or never done. This is a serious weakness indeed. The object of the discussion groups is to give adults an opportunity to hear a wide range of views, conflicting views, and alternative solutions to problems. As has been said previously, one cannot assume that by having twenty different people, the whole gamut of opinion and range of views on particular problems are going to be brought up. Many of the groups are fairly homogeneous. The members tend to be well educated. They belong to the professions. They are generally in middle to upper income groups. In addition, quite a number of the groups are self-formed groups. That is, a large core of the members were friends before. Under the circumstances, it is only natural that many would share views in common. If the programs are to serve their purpose, therefore, it is essential, if the participants do not raise alternative or opposing points of view, that the leader do so. Again, this assumes that the leader is aware of and competent to raise other points of view and to present them in the event the participants do not. Here again we get back to the problem of more substantive training for leaders, in addition to training them in discussion techniques. One observer reported that even in a situation where the leader attempted to make sure that alternative positions that members wanted to express were included, he was frequently not aggressive enough to bring it about. He reported:

> "In general, people were not 'blocked' by the leader, but had to be aggressive themselves, if their views were to get into the discussion. Other than stating their initial positions, only rarely did they ever anticipate or voluntarily bring up alternative positions, or take the devil's advocate role in the discussions."

By and large, there was no problem in the freedom of the participants to voice all points of view, regardless of how unpopular. The leaders genuinely wanted to have the people feel free to express their views, but as has already been said, they were not always aggressive or skilled enough to bring this about. Certainly the climate was set. It must be pointed out, too, however, that in the 'safe' programs, that is, in the programs like the Humanities where the participants were not too emotionally involved in the questions, there was no problem.

From an interview with the couple who dropped out of a World Affairs group, as described in an earlier chapter, it was apparent that in a few instances people were made to feel uncomfortable if they held unpopular views. When the owner of the home where the meeting was held stated that he did not care to have such views expressed in his home, the leader of the group made no effort to correct him as to the purpose of the meeting or to defend the rights of the couple to express any views they might hold. As a consequence, the couple dropped out of the group and never returned. There was only one such incident reported, but the fact that it happened at all is disturbing. It suggests that the program directors should make it absolutely clear to the leaders that each individual in the group has every right to express his views, no matter how unpopular, so long as they are pertinent to the discussion. It secondly suggests that when meetings are held in private homes the host must understand that all points of view may be expressed, and that if he has any objections to complete freedom of expression the meetings should not be held in his home.

Of the eight groups, only two groups had rotating leaders from among the participants. On the whole, it was not very effective. In one group the members were scarcely aware of who the leader was for the particular session. The leader played an almost completely neutral role. In the other group the observer reported:

> "The rotating leadership had a tremendous effect in bringing the members to feel that this was their group. Undoubtedly, it did a great deal to build group cohesiveness, even though the leaders were not always effective. It made for many poorer discussions. I feel a little more positive about rotating leadership than I did before the group experience. But I think some sort of a co-leadership should be developed which would combine some elements of rotating leadership with a more well-trained, consistent leadership having competence and good background."

Again, in respect to the rapport of the leader with the group and the degree to which he appeared to be well liked and respected, all the leaders established fairly good rapport with their groups. On the other hand, they tended to play a neutral role in at least half of the groups. In several of them they were practically ignored.

The Materials

The reports of the observers on the reactions of the group participants to the materials were essentially the same as those obtained in the direct interviews with participants. The World Politics materials received the highest approbation. The Humanities materials were found stimulating, but many participants were critical of certain sections of the material. In the Ways of Mankind groups, one group was quite satisfied with the materials, and for that particular group they were perfectly appropriate. The other group, whose members were rather more sophisticated, felt somewhat frustrated by the simplicity of the materials. The World Affairs materials were thought to be provocative and useful, but the same criticisms were made by the observers as had been made in the individual interviews: that the materials should have been more up-to-date and that they did not adequately provide for different points of view and different interpretations.

More than half of the participants in the World Politics groups and in the Humanities groups seemed to do all of the reading for most of the meetings. In the Ways of Mankind groups, the observers reported that it was difficult to tell whether the participants read the materials, since they could merely listen to the records being played, which were identical with the prepared materials. In one World Affairs group the observer reported that many of the participants seemed to rely upon the films and to take their cue from the remarks of the more articulate members of the group.

In terms of the quality and adequacy of the materials the observers again agreed with the participants in their rating of the different programs.

In all of the groups except World Politics, some audio-visual aids were used. In some cases they were records alone; others included records, films, and pictures. The observers felt that the films in the World Affairs program were very poor indeed. One observer remarked:

> "The films were completely ineffective and worthless. If anything, they inhibited discussion and wasted valuable time. It seemed to the interviewer that many participants did not read the materials, hoping to lean on the films, which were so innocuous as to lack provocation. Good films, of course, could be very valuable. In one meeting the film was not shown until after an hour of good discussion. After it was shown, some of the earlier good discussion and argumentation stopped, and the group never got going effectively again."

In the other World Affairs group observed, the leader, finding that the films were very poor, went to the trouble of getting films on his own. These were far superior to the films provided with the program. They were very much appreciated by the participants and were used effectively.

While one Ways of Mankind group seemed to like the records very well, in the other group, essentially a superior one in terms of membership composition, there was considerable criticism.

In the Humanities program, slides used in the art section in general were adjudged good and useful, although there were the usual questions about why these and not others. The music selections were generally questioned. In one group the leader programmed a "concert" of his own, which worked out well. In general, the audio-visual materials were good, and are essential in this course.

The Social Atmosphere

The atmosphere in all the discussion groups was described as being very friendly. In some, it was described as being extremely so. One observer reported:

> "It was a very congenial group, and the mutual feeling of liking

was certainly one of the strongest attracting and binding elements in the group. It was interesting to note that several members of the group might potentially have been rejected, but the group didn't let that happen. By being so completely accepting of them, it tended to bring out what social skills they had. Most of the people were very amiable and also had a good deal to offer personally. There was a party after the discussion series was over. There are tentative plans to visit museums and concerts as a group next fall. A few pairs of couples knew each other before the session. I am not completely sure if additional friendships, that is, permanent friendships, developed, but it is very likely that they did."

It was the "hospitality" groups like this one that tended to continue as groups in new programs. Some groups remained intact through as many as four or five different subject-matter programs. It was also in these groups, of course, that the closest friendships developed.

As for conflicts or tensions within the group, these were very few. This does not mean there were not serious differences of opinion, but when they did occur, they were amicably handled.

The Physical Setting

Four of the eight groups observed met in public places, and four met in private homes. All reported that the meeting places were quite satisfactory, several saying that they were excellent. Among the improvements they suggested, however, were that a round table be provided in the public meeting places. Another was that a place to make coffee be available where the meetings are held in a public place. One criticism of the private home was the fact that while it was very good for discussion, it was not satisfactory for the showing of films.

Three of the observers thought that public places for the meetings were preferable to private homes, indicating that a public place reduces the consciousness of status and income. One remarked that public places are better because they are not so comfortable that they encourage a purely social atmosphere. They were agreed, however, that meetings in private homes had some values which could not be achieved in public meeting places.

The two observers who thought private homes preferable pointed out that the comfortable, informal, "away-from-the-job" feeling achieved in the groups meeting in private homes was rarely achieved to the same degree in public meeting places. They further felt that for many of the participants, meeting in private homes was one of the attractive and unique aspects of the program. It clearly indicated that this was not a traditional classroom course.

The groups that met in different homes found it very interesting. They felt that they got to know each other better when they saw each other in their homes. The program organizers feel that there is a greater likelihood of friendships developing among participants when they have been in each other's homes. This tends to be borne out by the data from interviews with participants.

Another important aspect of holding the meetings in private homes is the fact that people who previously had not tended to do so got accustomed to having serious discussion in living rooms. Several reported that this carried over into their normal social relationships, and where previously they did not think it courteous to get into arguments about serious matters with friends, they now realized that it was perfectly possible to have friendly discussions on serious matters and that it was possible to disagree with friends in an amiable way. Quite a number have reported that previously they tended to avoid discussing controversial issues with friends, lest their friendship be ruptured.

General Comment

Of the eight groups observed, four were reported as being extremely successful, three as moderately successful, and one as poor and ineffectual. Two of the very successful groups were in World Politics. The others were World Affairs and the Humanities.

The most successful groups were characterized by good leadership, a considerable range in background and viewpoint among the members, and a sizable percentage of articulate and active participants. The least successful, in addition to being weak in the foregoing characteristics, was made up almost entirely of women. Participants and leaders who had been in more than one group, as well as the directors, were agreed that groups made up predominantly of women tended to be poorer discussion groups than those more equally divided or where men predominated.

The observers were especially struck with the fact that despite the criticism of leaders and materials, the great majority of participants obviously found the discussion experience pleasurable and stimulating. It was also apparent that in addition to gains in knowledge and understanding, warm interpersonal relationships developed which were enriching and valued. Above all, an atmosphere is provided by the discussion programs which not only permits, but fosters the free discussion of various ideas and encourages the expression of minority or unorthodox views. In view of the strong pressures for conformity which tend to characterize work and social settings, this alone is a valuable contribution.

Beyond this, however, it marked for many of the participants a return to study and intellectual pursuits. It provided for those who had had considerable formal schooling, and felt no need or desire to take traditional classes, an opportunity to re-establish contact with an educational program and with an educational institution, on a more mature or equalitarian basis. For those who had had rather specialized or professional training, the discussion groups provided an opportunity to fill in gaps in their educational and intellectual backgrounds. For them, this was a different kind of experience; an opportunity to study and discuss with other mature adults serious problems and ideas, a chance to cultivate aesthetic tastes. It was also evident that a sizable minority came because, although successful economically and in terms of material possessions, they experienced a sort of malaise, a dissatisfaction with the way they were living, and a need to re-examine their values.

The interviewers and observers of the Whittier groups were impressed with the degree to which the program had taken hold in that small, conservative city and the effect it had of bringing together, in amicable discussion and debate, cross-sections of the population who normally would never have had any social contact or intellectual intercourse. Whittier College, the sponsoring institution, gained a good deal in community good-will and approval. Few of its efforts have had so widespread an impact on the community.

For the Extension Division of the University of California, Los Angeles, the discussion programs have not only proven to be a worthwhile educational effort, but have attracted thousands of adults, many of whom had not previously availed themselves of extension offerings. The discussion group mailing list provided a large core of loyal supporters which made possible the development of many new, well-attended programs. During the past three years a number of week-ends and six weeks of the summer at the Extension Lake Arrowhead Residential Center have been devoted to the liberal arts. Almost all were fully subscribed. From thirty to forty per cent of those attending had been participants in discussion groups. Similar percentages formed the core of new lecture-discussion programs, integrated arts courses, a series on Russian Culture, etc.

Los Angeles has been notoriously a poor theatre town. Many professional efforts have been made to utilize Hollywood theatrical talents to present serious theatre. All failed to attract large enough audiences to survive. Convinced that it now had a sufficiently large clientele based on its liberal arts programs, University Extension launched a theatre project in the summer of 1959 in cooperation with leading Hollywood producers, directors and actors. Three productions were presented for three weeks: Dylan Thomas' "Under Milk Wood," Bertolt Brecht's "Mother Courage," and a new play by Nikos Kazantzakis. Although prominent actors were cast in the plays, their names were not mentioned in the brochures that went out announcing the productions. Before the first play opened, every evening performance of all three productions was sold out and hundreds of people were turned away. Approximately ten thousand seats were sold for the series. Again the liberal arts mailing list produced approximately forty per cent of the audience.

More recently the Division sponsored a philosophy lecture series on "Philosophies of Today" on Sunday evenings. Traditionally, Sunday evenings are very poor risks for Extension activities. But long before the course opened, the class had to be moved to larger halls three times until finally it was held in the largest auditorium on campus, Royce Hall, with a seating capacity of eighteen hundred. The series was entirely sold out and close to a thousand checks and reservations were returned. Again the liberal arts mailing list provided the large core of the audience.

It is clear, then, that the liberal arts discussion groups not only served an intrinsic educational purpose, but proved to be a useful device to attract to University-sponsored programs, many adults who previously had not been attracted by more formal and traditional classes.

Part Six

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

1. Participants in the Liberal Arts Discussion Programs for Adults are not typical or representative of the general adult population. They represent a higher-than-average stratum of the population in regard to income, education and occupation. They are active in community activities, read more than average, and read more serious matter.

2. Sixty-three per cent are women. Seventy-nine per cent are married. The median age is 38.5. Approximately fifty per cent enroll in discussion groups with their husbands or wives.

3. Fifty-three per cent had taken a class or course in the three years prior to the discussion group. Thirty-six per cent had been in a discussion group before.

4. The majority of participants enroll in the discussion groups because of interest in the subject matter, the discussion aspects of the program, and a desire for intellectual stimulus. In addition to these reasons, a substantial minority, one-fifth, enroll to meet people who share similar tastes and interests.

5. The educational level and prestige of the sponsoring agency is an important factor in attracting participants to the program.

6. A fifth of the participants are critical of the materials used in the discussion program. A fifth are critical of the leadership; and almost a third are critical of the participants.

7. Twenty-eight per cent report gaining "a great deal" of knowledge about the subject matter of the discussion group, 63 per cent report "some gain," the remainder "very little" or "none."

8. In regard to having subject-matter specialists as leaders or resource persons in the discussion groups, 39 per cent favor a specialist as leader, 21 per cent would have specialists as resource persons, 30 per cent are opposed to having subject-matter specialists on the ground that it would defeat the basic purpose of the discussion program.

9. The discussion programs attract more "liberals" than "conservatives," but the program in one city demonstrates that it is possible to achieve more balanced participation.

10. A majority of the participants believe that members of the groups tend to become more "open-minded" and tolerant of opposing views as a result of their discussion experience.

11. Approximately a third of the participants form friendships in the discussion program which continue beyond the period of the program.

12. There is little indication that the discussion experience stimulates participants to greater community activity.

13. There is considerable evidence to indicate that participation in the discussion groups stimulates continuing interest and participation in educational and cultural activities.

14. The great majority of participants in the discussion program feel that it is a valuable and significant educational experience.

15. The leaders in the discussion groups represent an even higher level of educational background and cultural interests than the participants. The great majority are college graduates (82 per cent) and more than half are in the professions. As a group, they are exceptionally active in community affairs. Most of the leaders derive great satisfaction from their experience in the discussion groups. More than half think their groups are successful; approximately a third think they are moderately successful. The leaders share the views of the participants in regard to the inadequacies of the materials in some of the programs. Eighty-six per cent believe that they derive benefits beyond those which the average participant gets from the discussion experience. They feel they learn a great deal about discussion leadership techniques and that they gain considerably in knowledge of the subject matter. They believe the program is educationally valuable and a majority wish to continue as leaders.

16. The leaders tend to play too passive a role. They do not always keep the discussion relevant, help it to progress; nor do they make certain that alternative points of view or opposing positions are presented. The substantive backgrounds of the leaders in the subject matter under discussion are frequently inadequate.

17. Despite the weaknesses in materials and leadership, most of the discussion groups are successful in that they provide a stimulating intellectual experience, some growth in knowledge and tolerance of other points of view, as well as in inter-personal relationships. They further stimulate continuing interest and participation in educational and cultural activities.

Conclusions

A. A striking characteristic of participants in the discussion groups is their high economic and educational level. In addition, a high proportion typically engage in educational and cultural activities, more than 50 per cent having taken classes or courses in the three preceding years, and approximately one-third having been in discussion groups before. This may appear discouraging to some observers because of the notion that the program "seems to reach those who need it least." There should be no cause for discouragement in the present composition of the groups. In the first place, the fact that two-thirds of the participants have never been in a discussion group and more than forty per cent have not taken courses in recent years indicates that the program does attract many people who ordinarily do not participate in adult education activities. In the second place, it is inevitable that people of more education should be attracted at the outset. They have already been exposed to ideas and are receptive to intellectual experiences. Their interest in these programs and their reported reactions indicate their hunger for more mental stimulation than is normally afforded them. For this reason alone, the program is worthwhile. It is meeting a real need.

But beyond this, their participation supplies the core enrollment which makes the program administratively possible and viable. As time goes on, with imaginative leadership, the program can expand to include groups with less formal education. This is already beginning to happen. In 1958, for the first time, discussion groups were organized under the sponsorship of labor unions. The socio-economic level of the participants in these groups is far lower than that which has characterized discussion groups in the past. The program is therefore likely to spread in widening ripples as more experience is gained in the administration and promotion of the programs.

This is not likely to happen automatically, however. It will require extensive efforts in those geographic sections of the metropolitan area where discussion groups have not been previously offered, as well as close cooperation with labor organizations, industrial concerns and neighborhood organizations.

B. The discussion programs tend to attract older adults than do the typical University Extension offerings. Whereas many of the enrollees in extension courses are motivated by professional or career objectives, participants in the discussion groups are predominantly motivated by a desire for intellectual stimulus and interest in the subject matter of the particular groups they join. For a sizable minority (21 per cent), the social aspects are also a motivating factor, although only in a few cases were they the exclusive one.

The percentage of married persons in the discussion programs is also considerably higher than among enrollees in regular extension courses. Even more striking is the very large percentage, almost half, who enroll with their husbands or wives. Indeed, quite a number of groups are largely made up of couples. For many, particularly the wives, this is a very significant venture. It provides the opportunity for joint participation in a serious intellectual experience. There are many indications that the discussion group experience stimulates discussion of serious problems between husbands and wives at home and carries over into their social relationships. The discussion of controversial issues with friends becomes respectable and accepted where previously it had frequently been avoided.

C. Except for one of the three areas studied, Whittier, the participants tend to be preponderantly liberal, with only small numbers of conservatives in the groups. If the purpose of the discussion program is to achieve a broad exchange of viewpoints, it is important not only that the materials represent different points of view, but that adherents of different viewpoints be in the groups. The Whittier program demonstrates that it is possible to get participation from among conservatives. But this does not happen by chance. It required a great deal of thoughtful planning, the contacting of conservative groups and individuals with prestige in the community, and their persuasion of the desirability and importance of the discussion groups.

D. Those critical of discussion groups frequently make the point that people don't learn very much in such groups, that too often it is a mere sharing of ignorance. This misses the point of the discussion group. There are undoubtedly better ways to secure information or factual knowledge. The purpose of discussion is to stimulate thought, to develop objectivity and critical thinking, to help people re-examine their views.

It is notable, however, that more than a quarter of the participants feel that they have gained "a great deal" more knowledge and almost two-thirds report that they gain "some" more knowledge of the matters under discussion. The replies according to program are even more revealing. In the program which most are agreed has the best textual materials (World Politics), the percentages are considerably higher, forty per cent reporting they had gained "a great deal" and sixty per cent "some" more knowledge of the matters under discussion.

Granted that these are subjective responses, it must be remembered that most of the participants are well schooled, and undoubtedly in replying use their formal school experience as criteria. Nor should it be overlooked that in those groups where the materials are less substantial the responses in regard to the gaining of more knowledge are less affirmative. It may, therefore, be concluded that for many of the participants there is a real increase in knowledge.

It does point up, however, the importance of having good substantive materials in the programs. It also indicates the desirability of securing more objective data through controlled experimentation concerning the relative effectiveness of the discussion method versus the lecture method in the gaining of knowledge.*

E. It is evident that the discussion groups have some effect on the reading habits of the participants. More than two-fifths of those interviewed report that they either read more than they had previously or read more serious things. In view of the fact that as a group they already tend to read considerably more, and higher quality reading matter, than the average citizen, the effect of the discussion experience on reading habits may be considered important. The percentage of those reporting a change in reading habits is considerably higher in the World Politics groups than in the other groups. This again points up the importance of the quality of program materials and the nature of the specific discussion program.

F. How much change occurs in members is difficult to assess. More than half the participants report that they have changed some of their views as a result of the discussions. The leaders similarly report that in more than 50 per cent of the participants there has been an increase in understanding and tolerance of other points of view. On the other hand, many members feel that little change occurred. Undoubtedly most of it is gradual and nearly imperceptible, with some dramatic exceptions. Most of the interviewees tend to regard themselves as quite open-minded at the outset. However, the value of this kind of experience lies in the fact that for twenty hours a person can see what happens in a group where open-mindedness is accepted as an important value. If the discussion proves to be stimulating and useful, it tends to increase a person's confidence in the desirability of an open, inquiring mind. The participant will have seen how even highly controversial issues can be dealt with in a more objective manner than is common. Unquestionably, this is precisely what happens in many of the

---

*This was undertaken in 1958 by Dr. Richard J. Hill, using a new version of *The Ways of Mankind* with lecture and study-discussion group methods—again at UCLA. See *A Comparative Study of Lecture and Discussion Methods.* White Plains: The Fund for Adult Education, 1960.

groups. On the other hand, if these programs are to continue, more precise information is needed concerning the impact of the programs upon the participants in regard to increase of knowledge, development of critical thinking, and the willingness to examine new and opposing points of view.

G. There is ample evidence that aside from their effect on reading habits, the discussion groups stimulate a sizable proportion of participants to continue their educational activities either in discussion groups or in formal courses (48 per cent). Their own testimony is confirmed by the re-enrollment figures in the discussion programs and by the enrollments of past discussion-group participants in other liberal arts offerings of the University. In a variety of lecture courses in the humanities and the arts, in summer residential programs in the liberal arts, in professional theatrical productions, 30 to 40 per cent of the enrollments or audiences had been participants in discussion groups. Administrators of the Extension Division are convinced that the discussion programs have attracted many adults to extension programs who would otherwise not have taken advantage of extension offerings.

H. There would appear to be little question that many of the participants regard the discussion groups as quite a different kind of experience from their more traditional educational experiences. A sizable number (44 per cent) go so far as to say that it is a more valuable experience. In any event, it has a number of unique aspects for the participants; its informality, lay leadership, and emphasis on discussion.

One of the most important aspects is the fact that for many, the discussion group is one of the few opportunities, if indeed not the only opportunity, they have to examine and discuss serious ideas and problems. This cannot be over-emphasized. It was mentioned repeatedly by participants, leaders and observers.

The further fact that the discussions take place in an atmosphere in which difference of opinion is not only permitted, but encouraged, should not be underestimated. In a society and in a period in which not only political and economic factors, but social pressures as well, tend to discourage the free expression of minority or dissident views, these groups undoubtedly make a significant contribution. More than one interviewee remarked that not since before the war had they enjoyed so free an interchange of views and opinions.

I. There is little evidence to indicate that the discussion programs stimulate greater participation in community activities or public affairs. On the other hand, an unusually high percentage of participants are already quite active and some undoubtedly regard participation in the group itself as a community activity. The World Politics and World Affairs programs stimulate considerable interest in international affairs, but quite a number enroll in these programs precisely because they are already interested. As for the other two programs, their subject matter is not such as to stimulate activity in public affairs. Furthermore, the discussion programs themselves stress understanding rather than action. The discussion experience may develop better-informed citizens who, depending on the subject matter of the program, may vote more intelligently, but this remains to be tested.

J. Aside from the universally-approved World Politics materials, there is considerable criticism by participants and leaders of certain aspects of the materials in the other three programs. Most of the criticism is justified. In view of the fact that the discussion groups are not led by subject-matter specialists, the materials in the discussion programs assume especial importance, because they substitute for the subject-matter specialist in providing the authoritative information. Furthermore, they set the tone and provide the framework and issues for the discussions.

It is reported by the area directors that participants who have been in a number of *successive* groups, experience the greatest change in views and open-mindedness. Actually, a single ten-session program is a rather short time in which to effect change. It is surprising that any change at all should occur in so short a time. It would seem desirable to develop *series of progressive programs* in particular subject-matter areas so that participants could extend their knowledge, deepen their understanding, and sharpen their perceptions in a particular field. It would also permit progression from simpler to more complex ideas and problems. It would mitigate some of the aspects of superficiality in some of the programs which attempt to cover too much ground, or too broad a problem, in much too little time and with much too little reading and study.

From the previous discussion, it would appear that good materials for discussion purposes should contain the following elements:

1. Basic and adequate background information on the issues or problems to be discussed.
2. Cogent statements representing opposing positions or different points of view.
3. Assignments for each discussion that are fairly discrete and do not cover too broad a range of material or ideas.
4. More basic material, rather than information that becomes dated too readily.
5. Materials should be well written and should not be too technical.

The World Politics materials include all the above elements and, as previously indicated, are the most unanimously approved. The excellence of the materials undoubtedly has considerable effect on the judgments of the participants concerning other aspects of the World Politics discussion groups

– the leadership, the gain in knowledge, open-mindedness, the quality of the discussion, etc. In each instance the World Politics participants and leaders are more affirmative in their evaluations than are those in the other programs.

Finally, it seems fairly clear that materials for discussion must be specially prepared or collated. Materials published for other purposes rarely include all or most of the elements enumerated above. Even when especially prepared, they can miss the mark. When materials published for other than discussion purposes are used, as in the case of the World Affairs materials, they are not likely to be very satisfactory.

K. The non-college graduates are more critical of the leaders and more conscious of the absence of a subject-matter specialist than are the college graduates. The former tend to be more concerned with gaining more information and securing answers to questions or problems than the latter. The college graduates, probably because they have had a good deal of formal schooling, are attracted to the program precisely because it departs from traditional classroom practice. They are primarily interested in discussion and the exchange of views rather than in getting more factual information.

It is probably for this reason, too, that the college graduates tend to be more critical of their fellow participants than are the non-college graduates. Wanting good discussion, the college graduates are critical of other participants if their contributions to the discussion are poor, ill-informed, or irrelevant. The non-college graduates who seek information and answers are critical of the leaders if these aren't provided.

The question may then be raised as to the desirability of having adults with widely differing educational backgrounds in the same group. Actually, compared with the general population, the participants in the groups studied have had a great deal of schooling. Even the non-college graduates tend to have quite a bit of schooling beyond high school, yet there are these differences between college graduates and the others. What if the participants were considerably more heterogeneous in terms of educational background – and this will happen if the program is expanded – would not the differences in expectations and objectives be increased?

This suggests consideration of differentiated groups within the same subject program, an advisory mechanism to guide enrollees into the group that would be most useful to them, and differentiated leadership roles depending upon the composition of the group.

L. Most participants are generally satisfied with the leadership, although approximately 13% rated it as "poor" and about a quarter of the participants as being only "fair." On the basis of the participants' reactions, the interviewers' evaluations of the leaders, and from observation of the meetings, the writer estimates that the leadership in about sixty per cent of the groups is quite good, but not so satisfactory in the remainder, particularly from the University's point of view.

The majority of the leaders have been previous participants in discussion programs. When the World Politics and Liberal Arts discussion groups were first started, the administrators tended to secure as leaders either those whom they knew or individuals who occupied positions of leadership in the community. They were selected because they were considered bright, alert persons of considerable ability and intelligence. Many of those who proved to be most competent leaders would probably not have enrolled as participants (because they were too busy, or because they considered the programs too elementary, or because they would tend to do their own reading privately in those fields which interested them). They were willing to be leaders, however, because they believed in the purpose of the programs and saw in the leadership role an opportunity to perform a significant educational and public service. In the case of the University-sponsored programs (and to some degree in the Whittier College program), the individuals approached also liked the idea of being associated with the University.

As the programs expanded, new leaders were drawn from among former participants in the discussion groups. While a number of good leaders were secured from this source, the general level was not as high as in the leadership drawn from the community at large. Leaders selected mainly because they were former participants, according to one area director, tended to be less imaginative, lacked broad educational backgrounds, were too dependent upon the guide, and in general were not as intellectually stimulating as the leaders drawn from outside the groups, who were selected because they were outstanding people.

All the data indicate that the leaders too often tend to interpret their role in a rather limited way. This may be attributed in part to their lack of experience, but it becomes increasingly clear that it is also related to the leadership training they receive in the programs. The emphasis in the leadership training is perfectly understandable, and stems from the concern lest leaders, without subject-matter training in the field, assume the role of teachers or lecturers. But this is perhaps the weakest aspect of the program, the notion of using lay leaders who do not have any background in the subject matter, and thinking that by merely giving them some brief training in leadership techniques they can do a good discussion-leadership job.

While discussion leaders need not be subject-matter experts, to be effective they must at least be well informed in the subject which they are leading. Unless they have fairly good backgrounds in the area, they cannot really guide the discussions effectively, frequently do not know the pertinent questions to ask, and cannot raise opposite or alternative points of view if these are not raised by the participants or are not mentioned in the text.

Furthermore, the role of the leader should not be the same in all groups. Some groups will require stronger leadership than others. In those groups which are more limited in intellectual resources, the role and contribution of the leaders should obviously be different from his function in groups having richer resources and broader experience to draw upon.

Good leadership is essential to the success of the discussion program. It requires a high degree of intelligence, a broad and cultivated background, a warm personality, an analytical mind, an adequate background in the subject matter of the particular discussion program, as well as some training in discussion techniques.

To improve the level of the discussion groups, therefore, it is extremely important that leaders be selected more carefully, that they be selected for their intellectual qualities and the backgrounds they have in the subjects which they will lead. Secondly, the training program should not only provide experience in discussion leadership, but should also give some attention to the subject-matter materials they will be using. This means that the training period must be longer than has previously been the case.

The amazing thing is that, in spite of some of the weaknesses of leadership, the discussion groups have been as good as they have. With improved selection and training they can become valuable indeed.

M. The nature of the sponsoring agency is apparently important to the success of liberal arts discussion groups. The higher the educational level and prestige of the sponsoring institution, the more attractive the program is likely to be to prospective participants. It also makes it easier to recruit higher-caliber leaders. The leaders in the Los Angeles area are particularly proud of their association and identification with the University.

It should be remembered, however, that the high educational level of the participants naturally tends to affect the institutional preference. Perhaps as populations with lower educational backgrounds are reached this will not be so true. On the other hand, it may be hazarded that it might be more true. Precisely because an adult had not been to a university, the opportunity of participating in a University-sponsored program might be especially attractive. There are some indications of this feeling among the participants having less formal schooling. It has certainly been true of the labor programs sponsored by University Extension during the past twelve years.

The fact that virtually all those interviewed stated that they would recommend the study-discussion programs to their friends is not only an indication of their own satisfaction with them but of their conviction that the program is important and significant both for the individuals concerned and for a democratic society. Many expressed this conviction in so many words. It is also reflected in their appreciation of the sponsoring institutions.

N. The fact that after completing one program, sizable percentages of the participants continue into other discussion programs or traditional classes or combinations of the two (the summer residential programs), suggests the desirability of flexibility and experimentation in liberal arts programs for adults. The discussions frequently stimulate a desire for more substantial information or for more intensive study on a higher level, which may require utilization of subject-matter specialists. Since this study was undertaken a number of advanced groups have grown out of the discussion programs in which, pursuing the same subject matter, specialists are brought in at regular intervals to provide additional information or insights and to answer questions which have arisen at intervening discussion meetings led by lay leaders. The specialists and the discussion leaders are involved in the planning of these programs and work together during their development. They have met with considerable success. The important point is that *methodology,* whether it be the lecture or discussion, the formal class structure or the informal group, has no virtue as an end in itself. Those methods should be used which are most appropriate and efficient in achieving the educational ends sought.

O. One of the significant findings is the strong identification with each other and with the program which many of the participants develop. There are a number of indications of this. One is the number of friendships formed. Another is the attendance, which holds up surprisingly well in most groups. In view of the fact that this is a voluntary activity with no credit, vocational goal or external pressures, and subject to interference from business and family affairs, the high percentage of attendance is extremely significant. It is notable that the attendance is frequently cited by the members themselves as indicative of the success of the groups and undoubtedly serves to increase their morale.

Further evidence of the warm relationships established is the disinclination of many groups to break up. This results in parties and pot-luck suppers after the courses are completed. A number of groups remain intact through several discussion programs. Several groups completing their sessions in June cannot wait until the new programs start in the fall and continue through the summer.

P. Finally, it may be said that, although skeptical at the outset of the value of discussion groups led by lay leaders, all the investigators are agreed, despite the many weaknesses revealed in the materials and leadership, that the Liberal Arts Discussion Program for Adults performs a valuable educational function. The value of this contribution can be materially increased by improvement of materials and better selection and training of leaders.